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**CASTLE DALY :**

***THE STORY OF AN IRISH HOME THIRTY YEARS AGO.***



CASTLE DALY:  
*THE*  
*STORY OF AN IRISH HOME*  
*THIRTY YEARS AGO.*

BY  
ANNIE KEARY,  
AUTHOR OF "OLDBURY," ETC.



*"Whereas to the composition of novels and romances nothing is necessary but paper, pens, and ink, with the manual capacity of using them,"—FIELDING.*

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# CASTLE DALY:

*The Story of an Irish Home Thirty Years Ago.*

## CHAPTER I.

“God doth not need  
Either man’s work or his own gifts : who best  
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best : his state  
Is kingly ; thousands at his bidding speed,  
And post o’er land and ocean without rest :  
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

MILTON.

If the day had been Ellen’s, the evening was Lesbia’s.

When she came down stairs into the Castle Daly drawing-room, dressed for late dinner, with a string of seed pearls round her neck, which Bride had taken from the old cedar-wood jewel-case that had not previously been open since their mother’s death, and presented to her in acknowledgment of her present right to wear jewels, Lesbia felt not only that she was tasting for the first time the sweets of her

heiress-ship, but that she was claiming the more subtle rights of grown-up young lady and beauty-hood which, under the pressure of Aunt Joseph's judicious snubbing, she had hitherto only ventured to take to herself by stealth, and at long intervals.

She did not look vain or self-conscious, or even excited. She was only radiant with the wholesome youthful radiance that comes of eyes shining with happiness and white teeth gleaming through red lips parted in perpetual smiles.

Mrs. Daly, who had never hitherto bestowed much attention on the friend Ellen and Connor had picked up without introduction, looked at Lesbia Maynard now with surprised approval, and secretly wondered why her own daughter Ellen, who was not less well endowed with natural advantages, had never yet been able to assume the dainty, complete, well-appointed young lady look that seemed to have come in a moment to little Babette.

The Thornleys had brought habits of order and home comfort into the Castle Daly household that were very pleasing to Mrs. Daly, and filled her with envy for Bride's powers of government.

After dinner, at Bride's suggestion, they all adjourned to the library instead of to the large, scantily-furnished drawing-room, where it seemed impossible for a small party to converse or follow any occupations comfortably. A

bright wood and turf fire burned on the hearth, and a leaf of one of the long windows was open, letting in the soft moonlight and the scent of garden flowers. The old grand piano, on which Ellen used to play jigs and national airs out of time and tune to the torture of her mother's ears, had been brought from the drawing-room to the warmer library, and much improved by Bride's care and tuning. She sat down and played a long sonata tastefully and well, while the young people congregated by the open window talking and laughing. From her comfortable chair by the fireside Mrs. Daly noticed all the little improvements and niceties of arrangement that Bride had introduced into the room during her three years' occupancy of it. Ah! she thought to herself, she has been able to carry out her plans. She has contrived to train the servants under her to a degree of neatness and carefulness that I could never persuade them to practise for me. It is because she has had proper support from the man at the head of the house. The people under her have not felt as my servants did, that the sympathy of the master was on their side, and that he thought my particularity as tiresome as they did. I could have managed to organize an orderly house, such as I could have lived happily in, if I had been alone, or if Dermot had been different from what he is. It has been very hard on me. I should actually have done

better if I had been alone. My husband has been no support to me.

This was a very ordinary train of thought with Mrs. Daly. She had spent a great many painful half-hours in her life, turning and turning similar thoughts over in her mind. They came and went ; accustomed guests looking into her mind with every-day faces of gentle discontent, and going away again leaving no remorse behind. This one was welcomed and entertained as usual. She did not know what a terrible power of pain it was endued with, or that during the few quiet minutes while she communed with it it was piercing her memory with a sting whose wound was never again to cease to ache.

When the crash with which Miss Thornley's musical study came to an end died away in the room, the conversation in the window grew audible enough to arrest Mrs. Daly's attention and break the train of her thoughts. It was Ellen's voice a little raised and eager that made itself heard first.

"But that is just what I hate," she was saying. "Sound reasoning is sure to be on the wrong side always. I just hate it."

"Thank you," Mr. Thornley answered, quickly. "You have quite satisfied me ; there is an end of our discussion. You acknowledge that sound reason is on my side. Call it the wrong side after that as much as you please."

"No, no; you won't understand. I did not say reason. I said reasoning. I meant that the reasons that can be put into words are nearly always wrong. The right side has so much above, behind, all round, that cannot possibly be said."

"Is not that a little too ingenious a way of claiming to be always right in an argument, where appearances are against you?" said Mr. Thornley, smiling.

"It is what I shall always think."

"An encouraging prospect for me in future arguments; or is it a warning to keep out of them?"

"Oh, no! I like arguments, only remember, if you ever really mean to convince me on any point, you must be unreasonable. Then I shall perhaps think that there may be something worth listening to in what you are saying."

Mrs. Daly noticed a look of amusement, slightly contemptuous amusement, she thought, on Bride Thornley's face, now turned from the piano, and she hastened to put an end to her daughter's exposure of herself by summoning her to accompany her up stairs, and help her to get to bed.

It was growing late when Ellen left her mother's room, for Mrs. Daly was troubled with many nervous fears that were increased by her husband's absence, and Ellen had to make earnest promises of careful supervision as to the putting out of fires and locking of doors, before her mother could be persuaded to compose herself to rest.

The other members of the household had, however, not yet retired to their rooms. Ellen heard sounds from the library as she descended the stairs. Bride was again at the piano, and Lesbia and Pelham (the only musical member of the Daly family) were singing a German watch-song together. She would have to wait a few minutes longer, she found, before she could set out on her promised round of inspection through the house. She thought she would slip out into the garden, and look at the mountains, and breathe the fresh night air, till the song was ended; so throwing a cloak round her head, she ran down the front door steps on to the terrace. The moon was sinking in the west, but the night was not dark. Thousands of fiery lamps glowed overhead, and the lake shimmered a steely sheet of brightness, dotted with reflected points of light. There was a night-thrush singing in the bushes near the gate. Ellen stood still for a minute or two to catch the faint warble mingled with the last notes of Lesbia's song, "Good night, All's well, Good night"—the two voices joined in giving the refrain, distinct and sweet, and then ceased. She was turning to go in.

"Miss Eileen, whisht! For the love of God and His Blessed Mother I want a word wid you. One that's dying there without wants a word wid you for the love of God." These words, in a low hoarse whisper fell on Ellen's ear, and at the same moment a hand was laid on

her shoulder from behind. She did not start or scream, for the cracked voice and trembling touch of the hand were familiar of old, and she was not surprised on turning round to find old Molly Malachy standing before her, shivering, shaking, and mumbling with some unusual emotion apparently, but looking a very natural object to be there.

"To-night, Molly?" Ellen exclaimed. "Do you want me to go down to the village to-night? Who is dying? Might not my visit wait till early in the morning? You shall go with me to the house now, and get anything that may be wanted."

"It's you that's wanted, Miss Eileen—a word wid you. Shure his reverence has been sent for, and is on his way, and there's not a minute to lose; and oh, Miss Eileen, Miss Eileen, sore will be yer heart, every day that ye live after, if ye don't do as I bid ye this miserable evening that's come to us all."

"Let me call Connor."

"It's yerself that's wanted, and nobody else, and there's not a minute to lose. For the love of God, come wid me now, avourneen macree."

The old woman had seized Ellen's arm by this time, and was dragging her towards the gate more rapidly than Ellen could have supposed such trembling limbs would have had power to move.

She trembled and shivered herself, but it was the thought of being taken all at once from the gay talk and every-day occupations of the evening into the awful presence of death. She had not the remotest thought of danger or distress to herself ; and she was not very much surprised, as she had often seen Anne O'Flaherty hurried away with similar persistence, to receive some death-bed confidence or have some last request urged upon her. She had very little doubt that it was some favour or promise of protection from her father that was sought to be extorted from her by dying lips ; and though compliance was painful, she had not the heart to refuse even as startling a request as this on the second evening of her return.

" Is it far, Molly ? Is it quite at the other end of the village ? " she whispered anxiously, when they had passed the gate and the first group of cottages on the roadside, and were approaching a more solitary spot, where a by-lane leading downhill towards a tract of bog-land opened from the village street. In the shadow of a wall a little distance down this lane stood an empty car, with a man wrapped in a loose frieze coat, leaning against the horse, his face hidden on his arm. Molly dropped Ellen's hand and ran towards the car, exchanged a word with the man, and then began vehemently signing to Ellen to follow her. Ellen hesitated an instant between fear and kindness, and then turned



down into the darkness, a little perplexed and annoyed with Molly for this apparently unnecessary delay, but not seriously alarmed yet. A minute more, and a sickening pang of fear, taking away all power of resistance, came. The cloak she wore was suddenly drawn over her face by a hand she did not see, and she felt herself lifted up from the ground in a strong grasp and pushed on to the car, to the seat of which other hands held her firmly, while the car set off down the steep road at a rapid pace. By the time she had recovered herself so far as to be able to drag the cloak from over her mouth and call for help, they had left the cabins some yards behind, and were plunging into the wild bog-land that lay to the west of the Castle. Her cries were stopped by a hand laid on her lips, and old Molly's cracked voice pierced the ringing in her ears.

"Whist, Miss Eileen, whisht, or we'll have to put you down, and the last words that he's longing to speak to you will never be said. It's our bare lives we're risking, avourneen, to save ye the worst part of the heart-break that has to come upon you; and shure ye'll not hinder what we're willing to do for *him* for want of courage. Darling lady, is not yer heart warm enough wid love for your father to keep out the could fear?"

"My father!" cried Ellen. "Oh, Molly, no, no; nothing

can ail him ; no one will have hurt him. You would not dare to touch me if they had, and you knew it."

" We're risking our lives for him and you this minute. Whisht, then, it's an accident that's come to him, and the poor boys ran and called me whin they saw how it was, and I'm doing the best I can for him, the best they'll let me who have the power to hinder. And ye'll not be alone, avourneen ; I'll stay wid ye, and his reverence will be there before daylight, for one's gone to warn him, braving all the danger that will follow. Bad luck to it all ! for if he'd come that was expected, neither priest nor friend would have been needed."

" I don't understand—I don't understand," gasped Ellen. " Did you say papa wanted me, and that he was hurt ? Why do we go so slowly ? Why do you hold me ? Let me get out and run."

" It's flying at the top of speed we are, darling ; don't you hear the boy chirripping his horse wid all the voice that is not choked wid sorrow. There, lean against me, and cry yer heart out, and then ye'll be ready to sit out the hours wid a still face and help him."

Ellen had wept away the first blinding rush of tears, and the feverish agony of impatience to be doing something and to know the worst had returned before the car stopped ; then Molly again drew the cloak forcibly over her face,

while the man who was driving jumped down from his seat, threw the reins on his horse's neck, and, lifting her from her place by Molly, carried her a few paces in his arms. She felt that he strode over some sort of fence, descended a step or two, there was the click of a latch, and she was placed on her feet within a door that had been pushed open far enough to admit her. The man had disappeared before she had thrown the cloak from her face, but she had no thought or observation to give to him. Outside there had been the faint light of a clear, moonless night, and the same glimmer of stars shone on the spot where she stood, for though it was inclosed between four walls, the roof was gone; but there was other light here as well as that of the stars. A lantern placed on a projection in the stone wall cast a broad streak of light along the mud floor, and, lying in the light, Ellen saw, and saw nothing else, her father's figure stretched out; the white face, raised a little by a heap of rags that had been thrust under the head, looked ghastly, and would have been death-like but for the frown of intense pain that contracted the brows. She could not restrain a bitter cry of agony as she threw herself by his side.

"Oh, papa, papa, what is it? Can't you look at me? Can't you speak to me?"

The frown of pain relaxed, the eyes opened and were

raised to her face with the old look of love, and there was a movement of the lips as if to speak ; but to Ellen's despair, instead of words, a thin stream of blood oozed from them and choked utterance.

"Whisht, thin, avourneen, whisht," whispered Molly, who now appeared out of the darkness close to Ellen's side ; "don't make him spake a word yet, it's but a few that there's left for him to spake ; let him keep the bit of breath that's in him to save his soul whin his reverence comes. There, sit down on the ground, and take his head in your lap. See, he likes that ; the breath comes easier now you have his head up. He's smiling on you, his own sweet smile, sweeter than May flowers."

"A doctor," gasped Ellen. "Oh, Molly, leave me to sit with him alone—I can—and bring a doctor and help. Why did not you think of that first ?"

"Would you put the body, that must anyway be stiff and could by morning, before the soul, that has got to live in heaven or hell for ever ?" cried Molly, indignantly. "Shure, for what he has done for me and mine, on my bended knees I begged his soul of them that were in sore dismay at the misfortune that had happened, but had their own lives to think of ; and I got leave to bring a priest here if he was alive in the early morning, and I brought you of my own will—but it was all I dare do."

“Mamma and Connor——”

“Whisht! whisht! look what you have done,” said Molly, pointing to the pale face, over which a quiver of pain passed at Ellen’s words. “I brought you to whisper holy words into his ear, and help him to die aisy. I thought ye’d have the courage, and be woman enough to know how, loving him as you do.”

“What can I do! oh, what can I do to make him suffer less!”

“Wet his lips wid that,” said Molly, putting a small bottle of whisky into her hand, “and maybe he’ll open his eyes and smile at you again.”

Ellen did as she was directed, and then with her handkerchief wiped the brows, on which the damp of death had already settled, and raised the head till it rested on her shoulder. The power of swallowing was gone, but the moisture to the lips seemed to bring refreshment, and Ellen repeated the operation again and again, finding some relief for her own extreme anguish of mind in having this little service to perform. She wore a small ivory cross on her neck that night, which Cousin Anne had given her on a long-past birthday: in stooping to wet her father’s lips the ribbon that fastened it became loose, and it slipped down close to his hand; his fingers closed feebly over it, and he smiled. It was more than a smile; he was

murmuring some words low. Ellen put her ear close to catch them. "Dying for another, instead of another—it is well. Something worthy at the end of a careless life. In one thing—only in one thing, like Him." Here breath failed, and there was a few minutes of very painful gasping but he had seen that Ellen was listening, and he made a great effort to go on; and now with more connection in his words. "Remember I die forgiving. Tell Pelham and Connor so. It was not meant for me, but I deserve it. King Log—Well, out of the way. Tell John Thornley I am glad I did not let him come here to-night. It was my place, not his." The sentences came out slowly, with long pauses between, but Ellen thought the voice grew stronger instead of weaker, and that a look of more perfect consciousness and an expression of peace grew into the face. "If you should ever see him anywhere—it is not likely, but if you should—tell him I forgave him my death. It was through my neglect he was tempted, and that I was glad it was not as he intended—it would have been a greater crime."

"Him! do you mean the man who did this?" said Ellen, shuddering inexpressibly—"you know who?"

There was no answer, only a smile; something like one of the old playful smiles that used to come when Ellen tried to coax some piece of news from her father, and he

pretended to be unwilling to trust her. Then, after a long pause—

“Your mother will be happier with Pelham. Love is not always enough—but I’ll be missed too.”

In these alternate pauses and gasps of speech and of intense listening, an hour or two of the night passed. Old Molly sank on her knees in a corner of the cabin, and began to tell her beads rapidly, in a loud voice.

“To keep off the evil spirits that were trying to come in and battle for the soul of the dying,” she whispered to Ellen, who would have trembled at the thought at another time, but who had no space in her mind for anything but grief then.

The stars one after another, in their march across the sky, looked through the rafters of the uncovered roof on to the group below. It seemed to Ellen, as her eye, raised now and then, followed their motions, as if she had fallen into some strange relations towards them, and was moving with them in hitherto unknown conditions of time through interminable periods. Millions of years, was it not—had she not read about it somewhere?—that they took to perform their vast circling round some unknown centre? She had got involved in it somehow, and was living through a millennium of darkness, instead of a common night on which an ordinary day could dawn.

It grew intensely cold ; a brisk wind rose, and blew chill and sharp through the hovel.

Molly rose from her knees, wrapped her old cloak round the dying man, and taking his feet into her lap, began to chafe his lower limbs.

"It's only his feet that are stone cold yet," she said ; "and the dawn is breaking, and wid the dawn the help they promised will come—the best of help—his reverence and the Blessed Sacrament. Avourneen, we have saved his soul betwixt us, you and I, to-night, keeping him alive for that ; and once the sun has fairly risen, I'm free of my oath, and can bring who you will. He's muttering to himself now, and does not heed us, but there's life in him yet, and he'll come to himself again before he dies. A strong, well-made man, like his honour, takes a long time to die, even when he's got a bullet inside him ; bad luck to the blundering hand that put it there."

Gradually the stars paled in the sky, the shadows in the far corners of the cabin dispersed, and daylight crept in. Mr. Daly seemed to be sinking into a heavy sleep, and Ellen began to urge Molly to set out to the Castle to bring help—declaring her ability to continue the solemn watch alone—when the long-listened-for sound of steps, and of a voice calling out to know if the shieling was inhabited, came at last. It seemed to bring Ellen back into the



actual world, and break the numbing spell of horror and bewilderment that had held her all night ; but with returning capacity for thought and comprehension of what had happened came still worse pain. It was not a vision or a nightmare ; she was not dead among the stars ; she was herself, and her murdered father lay in her arms dying. A great burst of tears came and saved her reason, and as the warm drops fell heavy on his forehead, Mr. Daly's eyes opened again, and consciousness and a look of eager welcome and relief dawned into them as they fell upon the priest whom Molly was now bringing in through the cabin door.

Ellen knew the priest's face, though he came from a distant village among the Joice mountains, for she had met him from time to time at Anne O'Flaherty's house, and she took his hand, and through her tears and sobs got out a few words of explanation. He told her that he had been roused at two o'clock in the morning by a lad bringing a request that he would go to the solitary cabin, near the bog behind Castle Daly, to administer extreme unction to a person who lay dying there, and that he had come at once expecting to find some wandering beggar who had fallen ill, while sheltering temporarily in the deserted house. Mr. Daly's eyes grew impatient, even while these few sentences were exchanged. There was no time to lose,

and the priest only waited to despatch the boy who had accompanied him to the nearest place from which a doctor could be brought, and Molly to the Castle, and then the last service began ; Ellen still supporting her father's head on her shoulder, and trying hard not to let her sobs shake her so as to make it an uneasy resting-place. For a little while the holy rite seemed to lift her above the power of sorrow, as if she too stood on the verge, and was entering on conditions of communion which could not be disturbed by absence of bodily sight and touch. Surely her soul would pass out too into the unseen world, brought near by the sacramental presence of the One Lord, in whom all souls live. She could not be left behind now the door was open, but must somehow escape, involved in the parting soul to which every fibre of her heart was bound.

She hoped ; but that exaltation had to pass, and the hope soon sank down into a mere dread of the time when her shoulder would no longer feel the weight of the burden that grew heavier every moment, when the close contact would be over, and her arms empty.

The final pang was further off than was probable just then, for Molly was right, and it took a long time for the strong man to die. The hovel became crowded with faces as the morning grew older. The first to arrive were Mr. Thornley and Bride, for Connor had gone off on a

fishing expedition at day-dawn, and Pelham stayed to comfort his mother, whom they had not dared to bring to the scene of the accident, till some more reliable account of Mr. Daly's state had been received than could be extracted from Molly. As soon as it was ascertained that any attempt to move the sufferer would only hasten his end, Bride went back to the Castle to fetch Mrs. Daly, and there was half an hour when Ellen and Mr. Thornley shared the watch alone together. It was the half-hour when Mr. Daly was most frequently conscious and able to say a word, and Ellen could not help half grudging that a stranger, who could not care, should share the precious looks and faintly-breathed-words with her. Yet, she could not deny that the moment of clearest consciousness, the most firmly spoken words and the very sweetest smile that came were called forth by the pleasure her father seemed to feel when he first perceived that Mr. Thornley was near him. His eyes rested vaguely on his face for a moment or two, not recognizing him ; but gradually recollection came, and with it a sudden light illumined all the dying face. A halo of glory Ellen thought it was, and always in memory she saw her father dying with that look of joy in his eyes. He made a sign to John Thornley to come near. Ellen bent down to listen too ; she could not afford to lose a word.

"You see it was well I came here last night instead of you."

A quiver of strong emotion passed over John Thornley's face.

"I see it saved my life," he said, in a voice trembling with feeling. "This was meant for me. You are lying here instead of me."

"A very good exchange," said Mr. Daly, smiling. "I never did think myself worth much ; you have all your chances before you."

"But if you thought there was danger, why did you come here alone ?"

"At least, I was never a coward. I have done a great deal of harm, and neglected my duties, as Anne O'Flaherty has often told me, but at least I am not a coward to let another person bear the consequences."

"You seem to be able to speak with less pain now," John Thornley went on more calmly. "Don't let us lose the precious moments. Have you not any deposition to make that might lead to the identification of the murderers ? So horrible a crime must not, shall not, I promise you, escape detection and punishment."

"Crime never does ; the punishment comes over and over again. Seed and fruit,—my own neglects and follies."

The peaceful face had become suddenly troubled, and

again the words came out with painful gasps and struggles. Mr. Thornley bent lower to catch any name that might be spoken. "A single word would do," he urged. "If you know anything, don't let the knowledge die with you."

The lips moved again, and some words came, but they were not in answer to the question.

"My sons—Pelham—you could help."

"I shall always feel that my life's service is owed to those you leave behind you," John Thornley answered; and he bent down and solemnly touched the dying man's forehead with his lips.

"Don't make him speak again," Ellen cried, almost angrily. "Don't you see that every word hurts? He was suffering less a minute ago. Why did you come near? Why could not you let him lie still with his eyes shut, as he was doing before you came?"

John rose from his knees by Mr. Daly's side, and for answer went and stood behind Ellen and began to pile up some cushions and shawls, which Bride had brought, into a support for her to lean against as she sat. "You must not grudge me those few words, that one touch," he said, softly. "I will not come near again to disturb him unless he wants me. You are fortunate, you have been here with him all night, while we slept."

Fortunate. The word pleased Ellen; she rewarded it

by raising her eyes to the speaker's face, and allowing to herself that it was genuine grief, such as she must admit to her sympathy, that was written there.

New-comers kept appearing at the low door. Mrs. Daly and Pelham, and a little later Connor arrived, accompanied by a doctor. Every moment seemed to add something to the tumult of grief that surged round the dying bed, but which seemed to have less and less power to reach the soul hovering on the confines of peace ; only able to turn back now and then and look pityingly through the fast glazing eyes at the pain it was leaving behind.

The last word and look were for Anne O'Flaherty, who reached the cabin half an hour before the end. Mrs. Daly, shaken completely out of her usual composure, and seeming for once to have changed places with Ellen, who had no vehemence of grief that day, had thrown herself on the floor by her husband's side, and was weeping wildly, begging for one more look or word of love. His hand moved feebly, and drew her head close to his own on the pillow, and opening his eyes once more he looked at Anne, who was stooping over him, with a smile of triumph.

"She does love me, you see, Anne ; *me* who never satisfied her. She loved me after all."

A few more words were murmured very low to himself a quarter of an hour afterwards. Anne bent low to catch

the sounds, and, raising her head, repeated the words calmly and gravely to the others.

“Satisfied ! When we awake in Thy likeness we shall be satisfied with it.”

Then John Thornley came and lifted the head with gentle force from Ellen’s shoulder.

“We can take him home to the Castle now,” he said.

“It will not hurt him.”

## CHAPTER II.

“ Then strive more gladly to fulfil  
Thy little part. This darkness still  
Is light to every loving will.  
And trust—as if already plain—  
How just thy share of loss and pain  
Is for another's fuller gain.”—A. A. PROCTOR.

WHEN a sudden calamity falls upon some members of a group of persons whom circumstances have thrown together, it is curious to see how one or two of the outsiders seem by general consent of the mourners to be taken at once into the fellowship of sorrow, while others, who are conscious perhaps of having within themselves as strong a yearning to offer sympathy and help, are persistently held aloof, and made to feel that they have neither part nor lot in the matter. Is it accident, or has character anything to do with the choice of who shall and who shall not be allowed to offer consolation? Bride Thornley made this observation, and asked this question, rather sorrowfully, of herself two days after Mr. Daly's funeral, as, taking advan-

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tage of a short gleam in a very rainy day, she was taking her constitutional walk up and down the terrace before Castle Daly.

Never in all her life had she felt so utterly lonely and left out as during the painful week she was looking back upon. And this as the result of her sister's return home and of John's having attained one of the wishes which he and she had put before themselves as a possibility to be worked towards ten years back. Is there any use in wishing, since the longed-for good always comes wearing such a different face from the one it has shown in the distance that one hardly recognizes it? Bride caught herself up sternly when the thankless sentence had distinctly formed itself in her mind. What was wrong with her? Had she grown mean and base all at once, to let a little sting of personal pain overpower her sympathy with the grief she saw around her? Ah! Here was the answer to her puzzle. No wonder the mourners had held aloof from her when, side by side with real concern for their sufferings, lay the half-formed grudge she was conscious of against John and little Lesbia, for that complete pre-occupation in the troubles of their friends which made a word or look from them hard to obtain in these days.

Yes; it was base. What did a week's loneliness signify? Why could she not put herself completely out of count—

the plain, stiff, unlovable self that just in this mood there was so much pleasure in abusing—and be glad because John for once had had occasion to show the rare unselfishness and tenderness of his character to others besides herself; and because little Babette had won him through her sympathy in the general trouble to adopt her as a real companion, in spite of her childishness? It was certainly very base not to be glad of that. Why should not John have two close friends in his sisters instead of one? Why not, indeed?

A gust of rainy wind blew in Bride's face as she walked. She drew her cloak close round and marched quickly on, trampling on herself in imagination, and treading down rebellious thoughts vigorously at every step. The front door opened, and two other figures appeared on the scene to share Bride's pacing place: Sir Charles Pelham, his rosy face composed into a mask of gravity that had yet something important and business-like in the look of it; and, leaning feebly on his arm, Ellen Daly. She had been very ill since the night of her father's death, quite confined to her bed; but there had been much anxious discussion that day during luncheon, in which Sir Charles Pelham, his son Marmaduke, Lesbia, and John had all eagerly joined, as to whether it would be possible to coax her out of doors that afternoon — a long, over-eager discussion

Bride had called it within herself at the time, and now (having had that impatient feeling in her heart) she somehow did not feel just in the mood to encounter a full look into Ellen's saddened face. She turned aside to let the pair pass her on the walk, and looked back towards the house.

Well, there was no lack of anxious eyes to watch the progress of that invalid promenade, if she abstained from looking. The front door had been left ajar, and in the opening stood Marmaduke Pelham gazing intently after his father and cousin, as if he were counting every one of their slow steps. Bride understood the wistful, yearning look that lent something of pathos to the young man's heavy, healthy countenance.

"He hoped she would choose his arm for her support during that first walk," Bride said to herself. "Poor fellow; he is very dull; but he knows what it is to be overlooked, I see. I should like to shake hands with him; but why does he draw in suddenly and shut the door with a bang? Ah! I comprehend—he sees and hears as I do, the library window opening cautiously, and John putting out his head to look towards the end of the terrace too. What does he expect to happen to those two that he should watch them like that? Surely one old uncle is competent to take care of a girl walking before her own

house ; let her have lost her father in ever so shocking a way a week before ; two other people are not needed to watch her as well."

If Ellen Daly's sad face was a jar on Bride Thornley's mood, John's anxious one was a yet greater provocation. She could not bear it. She turned abruptly at the end of the house, scrambled up hill, over soaked turf and flower-border, till she reached the high turf terrace at the top of the sloping garden. There, at all events, she should be alone ; and yes, for once, just for once, the grudging, self-pitying thoughts should have their turn, and get themselves expressed—so perhaps she should best see how ugly they were, and discover a spell to lay them for ever at rest.

Of course all pity was due to Mrs. Daly and Ellen ; they were the sufferers—and yet—and yet—there are so many sorts of loss ; it is not only death that takes away one's dearest, and leaves one standing alone. There are other shears beside the shears of the blind Fate severing lives that have been closely knit together ; and the severing is done so noiselessly, so gently, there must not be a word said—nor the least little cry. Surely the losses that can't be complained of are the hardest to bear. No warmth of sympathy comes to put a little fresh life in the numb, frozen heart ; it may turn quite to ice for what any one

cares. It is so mean to grieve over the loss of the first place in a heart to which one has only the right of having paid away irrevocably all one's own. It was simply what was to be expected ; and a middle-aged, plain, unattractive woman, who has been struggling with the world for years, ought to have won reasonable expectations as to her own claims by her struggles, if she has gained nothing else ; humility and plain sense at least may be expected of her. It is not even called fortitude, if she stands still with a smiling face, while one by one of those to whom she has given all her love and her life-work gradually take themselves away, to stand a little and a little further off from her, till the space is too great for any warmth of love to pass between.

Yet surely people might know that it is not so much less hard to see those you love best shut themselves away in a new sphere of interest, and a kind of love to which you are strange, than to see the golden gate of heaven close behind them. The door is shut all the same ; and it does not do you much good to be near enough to hear the sound of the festival songs and see the light of the lamps streaming through, while you are standing outside. Tears of self-pity welled up into Bride's eyes as the thoughts to which she had so long refused to listen clothed themselves in pathetic words, and one trickled down, at last, the

length of her cheek. She had to stand still to wipe it away, and, with the action, a sense of absurdity stole in and shattered the sentimental mood.

The wet cheek wrinkled up into a smile. To cry about herself, plain, middle-aged Bride Thornley, prosperous now, healthy, content, whose life, rightly looked at had not a rag of pathos to hang round it;—she could have beaten herself for being so absurd. So much for taking a constitutional walk alone, when one has been overwrought and when there is an atmosphere of infectious emotion pervading the neighbourhood! She would go in and sew a white tucker into Lesbia's new black dress, and put jet studs into John's shirt, ready for the evening. When she had done working for those two, no doubt some other work would open up, and with work of any kind, say it was scrubbing floors or hemming dusters, self-pitying moods might be defied.

At the end of the terrace, however, she paused again. She found she was not ready for the house just yet. It was all very well to reason so, but work was not enough. The most congenial work in the world might become husks such as the swine eat, if offered to the heart as a substitute for what the heart craved. It was mind-food, not heart-food, after all. Bride's heart had been stirred and swayed from its usual poise of calm content, and it needed

something more potent than ordinary common-sense lessons to still its yearnings.

In spite of wet feet and soaked skirts she stood quite still on the verge of the turf-walk, with her face towards the western mountains, unable to make up her mind to descend the slope. There had come a lull in the wind and the rain ; a strong gust had lately shaken the trees of the little wood to the north of the Castle, and they were now swaying themselves to rest again, with crisp, pattering sounds of trembling leaves, and groaning of branches—a great cloud, like a dusky, wide-winged bird, was moving rapidly across the sky, leaving the mountain-tops from which it had lately risen clear against a horizon where the crimson of sunset glowed through a dim opal cloud-veil. These sights and sounds had a powerful effect on Bride, who, in spite of her pretensions to be prosaic, had an open eye and ear for the mystic appeals of nature.

As she gazed, she felt as if from the glowing west strong arms had been stretched out, that folded her round and held her to a great heart, whose deep beatings rocked hers to a wonderful peace ; and, borne in on her mind as powerfully as if the sobbing wind in her ear had whispered the words, came the sacred appeal that had often touched her before, but never so closely, “ Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” “ I am chiefest among ten thousand, and

altogether lovely,"—in the wind, but not the wind—in the sunset glow,—in the murmuring of waters,—but above, beneath, within, nearer and closer than these—He was there, the still, small voice, claiming her heart. And she had been pitying herself, instead of blaming herself, because her heart felt empty, while He stood without. She had been measuring love, so much for so much, and forgetting that there was Infinite Love offered to her Love that could never fail or change. Again tears, but not of self-pity this time, welled up into Bride's eyes, and she turned round and once more paced the turf-walk slowly. She would not cheat herself; unpaid service was not good for anyone, nor unrequited love; and work for work's sake was poor husky nourishment for a living, craving soul; but then, that was not all that was left for those to whom the closest human love was denied.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

She was ready for the house now, she believed, and for any news that had to come.

By the time she reached the terrace steps, she spied John coming from the house to meet her, and she knew perfectly well how it was that the word *news* had come into her mind. There had been a vague notion hanging over her all day, that some tidings were in store for her, and now the purpose of opening out some important communication



was so plainly written in John's face, that she read it a yard off. Well, she was ready, only she thought she would put off the evil day for half an hour or so if she could.

"I am going into the house now," she cried, as John approached. "I warn you, you will find the turf-walk very wet."

"Can't you stay out a little longer, Bride? I have not been able to exchange a word with you for more than a week."

"Look at my boots."

"Brisk walking will dry them; and you say yourself that nothing ever gives you cold."

"I don't think I meant to include wet boots; but I see you are of Connor Daly's opinion, that I am as hard as nails."

"What business had he to say so? But, Bride, go in and change your boots, if you like. I can wait; and I want very much to have some talk with you."

"And I am ready for a talk, wet or dry, only I won't go back to the turf-walk for anyone."

"Let us come out on to the road, then, through the kitchen garden; it is dry enough there."

"Why through the kitchen garden?"

"Miss Daly and Sir Charles Pelham are still on the front terrace, and I should not like to disturb them."

"And that other pair in the flower-garden—are we not

to disturb them? Do you see, John, Babette and Connor Daly? I wonder how long they have been down there looking for violets. Long enough, I have no doubt, to make it only prudent for me to go and act chaperone."

"No, no; Babette has only just left the house. She and I have been together the whole afternoon. Come with me; you need not interfere. I should think we might trust even Connor Daly not to begin talking nonsense to Babette the day after his father's funeral."

"But it is not the day after Babette's father's funeral, and I am not sure that I can trust her not to talk nonsense to him on such an interesting occasion as a first walk after a week of gloom. No, don't start. I am not saying any harm of her; but can't you see that she is just one of those girls who never forget, or let other people forget, that they are girls, and in the very nature of things require nonsense to be talked to or by them?"

"I think you underrate Lesbia. It strikes me that she has shown remarkable good sense and feeling during this last trying week; and this afternoon she came to me of her own accord, and consulted me about a plan for the future she has thought out with considerable clearness and prudence, as it seems to me."

"Oh, she came to you about it! It is her plan you have been discussing together?"

"Of course ; you don't suppose that if I made a plan I should go and talk it over with little Babette before I mentioned it to you. Why, Bride, I thought you were miles above suspicion, and would never imagine such a thing as that I could put you aside, such old partners as we are, you and I."

"Well, well ; whatever I may have been thinking, don't stand still and stare at me in the middle of this swamp. One look such as that is punishment enough for all my sins. Let us move on towards the road ; and tell me this wonderfully clever plan of Lesbia's."

"Remember that you have a veto on it, and that if you seriously object we both submit at once."

"Honestly."

"Speaking of myself, I should be sorry to give up the scheme now that it has been suggested to me, and I see through it a way opened of fulfilling an obligation that weighs on me ; but your wishes come first ; new obligations don't unloose old ones. We have fought a hard battle together, you and I, Bride ; and not for the world, not for any new duty in the world, would I even seem to throw you over, or detach myself from you, now we are beginning to win it."

"John, you force me to be magnanimous. Here and now I yield for ever an old point of dispute. I solemnly

acknowledge that men are juster than women; and that they can, the good ones, even under the impulse of a new feeling; see how things look to those who don't share their infatuation."

"But, Bride, I said nothing about a new feeling. I spoke of a new duty that quite against my will has been thrust upon me."

"Oh, yes, I heard; but now the plan. Let me hear the plan, and when my mind is set at rest about that, we will, if there is time before dressing for dinner, take out our microscopes and our scalpels and dissect our motives scientifically."

"Well, you are aware that Mr. Daly's will was read yesterday morning, and that all the afternoon and evening Sir Charles Pelham—who is Mrs. Daly's trustee—and the sons and I were hard at work examining papers and discussing possibilities. It was a disheartening task enough, for the affairs are even in worse confusion than might have been expected; and when I went to bed last night I could not see that there was anything left for the family but separation, and dependence on the generosity of their relations, for a time at least. We have gone through such another crisis, Bride, and know what it means."

"Yes, yes; and I am sure I feel very much for them all; but I don't believe they can be nearly as badly off as

we were when we were turned out of Abbots Thornley. The sons are both grown up and educated in a way, and surely Mrs. Daly had some fortune settled on her?"

"A very small sum. You are right to say that the sons are educated *in a way*. Just enough to make it impossible for them to begin afresh and turn to anything useful."

"It is very sad, and, as you say, we have gone through it all ourselves; but, John, don't think me hard-hearted if I remind you that you have often said you believed we came through as well as we did because from the first no illusive offers of help were held out to us by anyone, and we knew at once all we had to face, and that our dependence must be on ourselves and each other."

"We two have come through the trial, but not all of us who went in; there were shipwrecks, you know, on that sea."

"Oh, John, don't; it's like touching a wound."

"I know, and I am very sorry. Only if we are to understand each other, I must show you all that is in my mind."

"Go on; I don't have to find out now that your heart is really softer than mine. Can't I have the plan without any more preamble?"

"It is just this—Lesbia's idea, mind you, not mine. She tells me that she has taken a very great liking to this house and neighbourhood."

"Where your life has been twice attempted. She has not lived a winter here."

"The winters are pleasant and open enough, and Lesbia professes a great love for fine scenery."

"Or fine compliments, *à la* Connor Daly. I wonder which the child means?"

"She says scenery, at all events. Let me get on with my story. She has asked me, since she must have some settled home of her own now, to rent this place of the Dalys. It is perfectly clear that they can't go on living here; but there is another house on the estate—a small place up among the hills—which Mrs. Daly and her daughter seem to wish to occupy; and if we took the Castle off their hands, they could all live there together in tolerable comfort. Connor would be able to finish his college course in Dublin, and read for the bar, as he wishes; and the eldest son, who seems a sensible fellow, might take the management of the estate into his own hands. His uncle hinted that he should not object to advance a little money to keep things together if I were willing to remain on the spot a few months longer, and superintend till Pelham gained experience. Under this arrangement the debts might be paid off gradually, and affairs worked into order. What do you say?"

"I say it is an excellent plan for the Dalys."

“ And for ourselves.”

“ Oh ! John, can you really mean it ? To sink down into a land-agent again. To give up the editorship of that ‘ New Quarterly,’ and the literary career we have looked forward to so long.”

“ I should not give up the editorship. I am not so Quixotic as to throw away seven or eight hundred a year for a whim, I assure you. Most of the work would be as well done here as in London, and I could run up to town every two months or so. Lesbia will want to be there, I suppose, for part of the spring. It would all fit in very well.”

“ But why should you work yourself to death for people who a little while ago treated you as only rather better than an upper servant, and who, as far as I can see, are nothing to us ? ”

“ Bride, I think I can make you see further. Have you never thought of it ? No, for you did not know how obstinately set I was on keeping my appointment with Dennis Malachy that night, and how steadily resolved Mr. Daly was to go in my stead. It was to his death he went ; and you know that shot from behind the wall was meant for me. Can I help feeling that some of the cares and responsibilities of the man who died in my place have fallen on me ? ”

"I don't know, I am sure—it was not his intention to die."

"I am not a man to take a sentimental view of obligation; but it is impossible to live through such a night as that of Mr. Daly's death without being changed by it. There was a look on his face when he fixed his eyes on me, and said, 'You see it was well I had my way about coming here,' that I shall carry in my memory to my dying day, and after. He meant quite simply, that it was *well* he should be murdered instead of me. I believe the thought made death sweet to him. I used to look upon him as a sort of fool, and now——"

John did not finish his sentence; a quiver in his voice warned him to stop. The road began to be steep here. Bride slipped her hand under his arm, and they climbed on a few minutes in silence. She felt as if a prison wall were closing round her. To live on here, with the Dalys for nearest neighbours, seeing John and Lesbia gradually getting absorbed into their lives, hearing about them continually, breathing the atmosphere of devout preoccupation with their interests, that had roused her jealousy this last week. No prospect could possibly have promised her more temptation or pain, or been more completely distasteful. She would have to acquiesce in it, she knew, but she could not help making one more faint struggle before she gave in.



"Granting that this plan is right for you and me, John," she said, "is it well for Lesbia to be indulged in her wish to remain here? When you first heard of her heiress-ship, you said the one thing you would most anxiously guard against was her being married for her money. How will you answer it to your conscience to put her in the way of intimacy with those two penniless, handsome young Dalys?"

"Lesbia has a great deal more judgment than I gave her credit for at first, and she is very open. She has told me already exactly what she thinks of Connor Daly, and I can see she is in no more danger of falling in love with him than you are. As for the elder lad, the very handsome one, he and she don't get on together at all. They seem hardly to be on speaking terms. I have watched them closely, and I don't think they have exchanged a dozen words this week. No, I shall not have the least uneasiness on that score. I do not see any difficulty there."

"Of course you don't, just because it is the obvious rock in the way, and straight before your blind masculine eyes," thought Bride to herself.

John paused as they turned to go home, and pointed to a particular spot on the road. "It was just there that I saw Mr. Daly last," he said; "he was mounting his horse for that ride. Miss Daly was standing at the gate to watch

him ride away. I heard her ask him to walk with her every night of the full moon. We two were the last people to see him before the accident."

"*We* two," already in his thoughts, and for so long it had seemed a mere matter of course to Bride that no one but herself could be the second in John's *we*. The walls were closing round indeed, and her consent to be shut up in them would have to be given in a minute or two.

"You are very silent, Bride," John said as they drew near the house. "I have stated my case, and you have hardly spoken a word; but, remember, the decision rests with you. Say that the plan of living here is disagreeable to you, and it shall never be mentioned again. I have told you why I think these people have a claim on me for service, but you come first. Lesbia sees it too. After all you did and were to us in our struggling days, the choice of our home, now that we are free to live where we please, should rest with you."

"To live among people who hate us," Bride said slowly at last.

"Yes, take that into consideration. I want you to weigh all the disadvantages fairly. Yet, I don't think that objection counts for much. We should live the prejudice down, and for my part, I think 'beginning with a little aversion,' answers as well with neighbours as with lovers.

One has a pleasant sense of victory and triumph over them when one has won their respect at last."

"John, what makes you so ingenious?"

"Bride, what makes you so silent? Are you reluctant to decide, dear, and had you rather I divined your decision without more words? I think I see. It shall be 'No' to Lesbia's plan, then, and without further allusion to it we will revert to our original scheme of a year's travel before we settle anywhere. We used to talk of seeing Rome together, when it seemed as likely as going to the moon. I will speak to Lesbia."

Bride drew a long breath. If it could be settled so. If she might but stretch out her hand and take the pleasant life, far away from the country that was hateful to her, with John and Lesbia, her own brother, her own little sister, for whose sake she had done some hard work in her time, securely withdrawn from the adverse influence she believed was stealing them away from herself. If she might love her own life, and choose her own good, and let other people carry their proper burdens as she had had to carry hers. Why not? Was there never to be an end? had she not done and suffered a good deal for others already? Was it not time to think of herself?

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. I with the crown of thorns, with the wounded hands and feet, the

Lord and King of sacrifice. Open, and I will come in and sup with you."

Again, in the whisper of the wind among the trees, the low voice seemed to question with Bride's heart. Yes, it was just that—that *was* the question. He was there waiting for an answer. One could not entertain Him without following Him, or have self-pleasing for a third at that feast. Self, or Him—one ruler or the other—and again and again in one's life the choice has to be made. They were close to the Castle now. While John stooped to unlatch the garden gate, Bride took a long look, a long considering look at the building before her. Its straggling front, with the ivy-grown towers and irregularly-shaped doors and windows, the neglected premises behind, the rambling untidy garden: all intensely unhomelike in her eyes, but from that moment her home. She swallowed the bitter potion with a gulp, resolving never to allow herself to find its after-taste bitter.

"John," she said, putting her hand on his shoulder, as he held open the gate for her, "you misunderstood me. I was only making up my mind slowly, as you know I do. I have looked at it all round, and if I really have a veto, decide on staying here. There is a great deal to be said in favour of Lesbia's plan."

"You really think so! My dear Bride, how glad I am."

It was provoking to see how his face brightened. Bride hurried up the walk, and, to escape further conversation, set herself vigorously to work to rub the mud from her boots on the door-mat, as if she could think of nothing further till she had obliterated all trace of her wet walk from her person.

"It's of no use," she said to herself as she worked away ; "I don't come into the house the same person that I went out. I know it's a turning-point, and that I shall never be able to forget this wet walk as long as I live. In it I have turned a leaf in my book of life, and I can't put back the page. Whatever the new reading is, I've got from this time to begin to spell it out."

There were other people in Castle Daly that day besides Bride Thornley who always had to look back upon that wet afternoon's walk as one of those turning-points in life—places where two roads meet—which in after hours tempt the thoughts so often to recur to them in vague wonder as to how it would have been with the life if the rejected path had been followed.

Ellen and Sir Charles Pelham entered the house a minute or two after Bride quitted the hall, having also come to the conclusion of a conversation that decided the principal events of several lives. Ellen crept up-stairs wearily, looking very pale and subdued ; and Sir Charles's

ruddy face, as he turned into the library and stood warming his hands over the fire, wore an unusually thoughtful, puzzled expression. He was busy making up his mind whether he was most annoyed or gratified at the result of a step he had taken on a sudden good-natured impulse, aroused by the pitifully red and swollen state of Ellen's eyelids.

"Well, Marmaduke, my boy," he said to his son, who entered the room in the midst of his musing, "so you've come in; I was just thinking about you, and wishing for a chance of speaking to you alone. I've had it all out with your cousin Ellen. I thought it best, for you know there's nothing so wearing as suspense, and she seemed so down-hearted and miserable, poor girl, I thought it would cheer her to know there was a better prospect before her than she had any right to expect."

"You don't mean to say, father, that you've been talking to Ellen about what I contided to you last night? Why, I've never said a word of the kind myself to her yet."

"I was paving the way for you, and very grateful you ought to be to me for it, knowing as you do the opinions I hold against cousins marrying, and the little inclination I have to this match; there are not many fathers who would have set about such a piece of business for their eldest sons, I can tell you."

"She listened to what you said? you think I have a chance?"

"Of course she listened to me, and though you may fancy I have not the matter as deeply at heart as yourself, you may rest assured that if she can't be induced to see your offer in the light you could wish, it is not for the want of having had its advantages placed before her. 'My dear,' I said, 'Marmaduke surprised me very much yesterday after the funeral by speaking to me about the affection he says he has long entertained for you,' and then I went on. Of course, I did not pretend that it was precisely the match that your mother and I should have chosen for you, being cousins, and so on, but nothing could be kinder or more encouraging than my manner to her. 'We are all very fond of you, my dear,' I said, 'and we would give you a cordial welcome into the family, and do our best to make you happy, and take good care of you. You know you are not exactly fit to take care of yourself,' I said; 'you are unfortunately like your poor dear father, too full of generous feeling to be able to cope with the world;' and then, to prove my point, I just instanced her imprudence in going out with those people on the night of her father's murder, and her impulsive manner at the inquest, which has set everyone in the neighbourhood talking of her, when she came for-

ward a second time to give evidence in favour of the old hag whom everyone but herself believes to be in league with the murderers, and who is, at all events, doing all she can to shield them from justice now. 'Of course,' F said, 'neither I nor any of my family would think for an instant of accusing you of want of proper feeling. I only speak of these things to show you how liable you are to be misconstrued when you follow your quick impulses without consulting anyone, and how much better off you will be under the guidance of a sensible, kind-hearted husband, such as Marmaduke will make you, who has known you all your life, and will understand better than anyone else can how to take care of you.'

"I am sorry you said all that, father; she will think I am not satisfied with her as she is, and that's not true. She may say and do what she likes for me, there's not an English girl I've ever seen fit to hold a candle to her. I wish you had let me speak for myself."

"It would have been a waste of words. It's no such great privilege to be refused, I should say, that you need look black at me for taking the brunt of your first offer on myself. I'll never take so much trouble again in any of your love affairs, I can tell you, for I've argued and talked in the mist till I've made my throat sore. She has just the same kind of obstinacy that her poor father had. You



think she is agreeing with every word you say, and then she turns round and twists it all to prove her own side of the argument. She'll marry some scrambling, out-at-elbows Irishman, who will talk sentiment to her by the yard, and bring her to beggary—that will be her end.”

“I shall do my best to prevent it, father.”

“You'll be a fool for your pains, then. She does not care a rush for you, and never did, and never will. I've made out so much to-day, at all events, and tell you plainly to settle your mind. Why can't you leave well alone? You told me last night that the chief thing you cared for was to behave handsomely now the family are in trouble, and you have behaved very handsomely, and so have I. It went against the grain, but I did my best to persuade her to have you. I offered her a good husband and a thoroughly comfortable English home; and if she prefers poverty and muddle down here, it's not my fault or yours. It might show you, though, I should think, that she's not the girl to make you happy, my boy, eh! or to come after your mother at Pelham Court.”

“All the same, I wish you had not meddled, father. She'll be on her guard now, and I suppose I shall never have an opportunity of speaking.”

“You shall make your next offer yourself, I promise you. I've talked till my throat's sore, and done my best, and

you don't seem the least grateful or satisfied. I thought you'd have been more reasonable, I must say, Marmaduke. Hark, there's the dinner-bell at last. Well, it's something that another of these dreary days is nearly over."

Mrs. Daly sat at the dinner-table that day for the first time in her widow's weeds. She had been almost beside herself with grief at first, and there had been serious apprehension of brain fever; but in a day or two she recovered her self-command, and seemed by a strong effort of will to shut back her overwhelming pain and despair behind the strong gates of reserve and silence within which she habitually entrenched herself. After that there was little hope of approaching her near enough to comfort her. Her face, always still and grave, hardened into a stony look of endurance that froze words of sympathy on the lips of those who tried to speak them. Her eyes seemed to be always asking the question, "Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" and forbidding any attempt at an answer.

Little Lesbia was struck with a great awe of her when she came to offer the bunch of violets she and Connor had gathered in the garden. The large beautiful tears that came so readily into Babette's eyes, welled up at the sight of Mrs. Daly's pale worn face under the circular folds of crimped muslin; and as she held out her hand with the

violets, her heart swelled with warm generous feeling ; for had not she spent the entire afternoon with John in devising schemes to rescue the widow and her children from poverty and dependence, and secure them a home ! She experienced a painful chill of disappointment when Mrs. Daly put out one finger for her to shake, quite ignoring the violets, and met her swimming eyes with a steady, tearless gaze, that seemed somehow to take all the glow and glory from her projects of protection, and made her feel herself as impotent a comforter as if she had sunk back into being Aunt Maynard's snubbed companion again. There was not much conversation during the long evening. After the silent melancholy dinner, Sir Charles Pelham drew John Thornley into a window recess and held whispering consultations with him on business matters from time to time.

Ellen seated herself on a footstool by her mother's chair—secure that no one, not even her cousin Marmaduke on his last evening in Ireland, would have courage to attempt a conversation with her in the neighbourhood of that fortress of grief. Marmaduke Pelham stolidly settled himself in the arm-chair on the opposite side of the hearthrug, determined that, if he might not talk to his cousin Ellen, he would at least spend the last hours of this unhappy visit in looking at her—all the while quite

unconscious that he was heaping up bitter wrath against himself in her memory, by being the first person who had ventured to sit down in Mr. Daly's accustomed seat since his death, and that Connor was making vehement signs of disgust at him for his want of consideration behind his back.


Ellen sent one half-angry, half-appealing look towards him as he took his place, the meaning of which he did not in the least understand ; and then she appeared to forget that he was there. Her eyes fixed themselves vacantly on the now closely-shuttered and curtained window recess. But her thoughts were evidently far away, following the incidents of that evening when she had stood there last talking and laughing ; when the window was open, and when, a mile or two away outside, something was happening that she must not go on thinking about for ever. Now and then she roused herself and turned to look at her mother, and then the expression of another kind of sorrow stole into her face—a look such as a faithful dog casts into his master's face when he sees he is in pain and cannot help him. At such times she would put up her hand stealthily to stroke her mother's knee, or touch softly the drooping head that never changed its position, or showed the least consciousness of her caresses. Lesbia, watching this little pantomime, was startled by the sound

of an impatient groan coming from the direction of the window recess, that in the stillness was quite plainly audible through the room. Everybody turned his or her head to discover what it meant, except John Thornley, who stood still, confused and convicted, and who must have been, Lesbia concluded, much disgusted with himself for betraying so publicly the extent to which Sir Charles Pelham's conversation bored him.

Lesbia had opportunity for watching her neighbours, for no one took much notice of her; and she found so much food for thought, that the long hours of the silent evening did not hang heavily on her hands. It is always a matter of deep interest to watch the way in which new circumstances draw out unexpected points of character in our friends and acquaintances. Little Lesbia was, perhaps unknown to herself, a diligent student of character, and owed the pleasure of her evening to philosophical observations on the change in Mr. Pelham Daly which had been effected by the events of the last ten days.

Everybody in the house had felt the change, but no one but little Lesbia had had leisure of heart to chronicle its signs and comment on them in thought. It was not that Pelham put himself more forward or was less reserved than formerly during those dark days, but his silence no longer seemed the effect of shyness, and his reserve was

not, as formerly, worn as a suit of armour for the purpose of keeping intruders at a distance. He looked a great deal older than he had looked a week ago. He was so busy all that evening sorting and numbering letters, and sat so far out of the circle of the lamp-light, at his father's old pigeon-hole desk in a dim corner, that Lesbia could venture to let her eyes rest for quite a second at a time on his face, while she wondered what the difference in him really was—whether there actually was a line between the black brows and a hollow under the large eyes, or whether it was only the new expression on his face that made him seem so completely a grown-up man now, and the head of the house. She had to turn her eyes quickly away for fear of meeting his when he left his place, as he did every now and then, to go and stand behind his mother's chair, and make her talk to him for a few minutes ; but though she was not looking, she could hear the tender tones his voice took in addressing his mother, and observe that Mrs. Daly never ignored his little caresses as she did Ellen's. When he crossed the room and laid his hands on Connor's shoulders to stop him in picking out a dance tune on the piano, as he had carelessly begun to do, there was nothing of the old provoking peremptoriness in his manner, nothing that the touchiest younger brother could possibly resent. Connor, who had begun a petulant twist to shake off the



restraining hands, changed his mood when he looked up into Pelham's face and substituted an acquiescing nod and his own bright smile for the intended growl of remonstrance.

Connor and Lesbia had been a great deal together during the last week, and had grown quite intimate. He was very miserable. His handsome face had often been quite disfigured with weeping, and his blue eyes, like Ellen's, were almost extinguished under the painfully swollen lids; but he was not in the least altered or transformed by his grief, he was just the same Connor Daly who could not possibly, whatever tortures of body or mind he might be enduring, get through a silent evening without finding something mischievous to do with his hands, or some occasion for making grimaces at somebody.

Lesbia had liked his seeking her out, to talk of his sorrow, and had felt flattered by his finding her little attempts at soothing helpful. It was a new thing to have people coming to her to be comforted, but as she watched the two brothers that night she acknowledged to herself that, however flattering confidential talk may be, it was the sorrow that could not pour itself out in words that had her strongest sympathy. Yet one or two words, when they seemed to well up from depths of pain after long restraint, might not be amiss. It might not lessen sympathy to hear such spoken, if they seemed to be able to get themselves

said to one person only. It was Lesbia's lot to be drawn into a conversation, quite at the end of the evening, that led her to this amendment of her previous opinion. Sir Charles Pelham, coming hastily out of the window recess to wish Mrs. Daly and Ellen good night as they were leaving the room, knocked over the pigeon-hole desk at which Pelham had been sitting and scattered its miscellaneous contents over the drawing-room floor. Lesbia stooped down to help Pelham to gather them up, and it proved to be a longer business than she had counted on. The other occupants of the room one by one slipped away, and they were left unperceived in the shady corner to finish their task alone. Lesbia picked up and smoothed the papers, and Pelham restored them to their proper divisions in the desk. They worked in silence till the last packet was replaced, and then quite abruptly Pelham began: not looking at Lesbia, but fixing his eyes on a certain pigeon-hole where he had just replaced his own old school letters to his father:

"I wonder why he kept these: there's not a single word in them that anyone would have cared to read a second time. I don't suppose I ever did write a word to him that could have given him a moment's pleasure—Miss Maynard, I'll tell you something. The last time I ever talked alone with my father we had a trifling



misunderstanding, he and I. It was on the day when Connor and Ellen called on you to ask you to travel to Ireland with us. My father and I walked along the shore, and he wanted me to speak openly with him, and I would not, though I knew all the time that my reserve pained him. It's folly to think more of that little circumstance than of all the rest, but I do. Perhaps I should be able to grieve openly, like Connor and Ellen, if it were not for that. Can you understand my feeling so?"

Lesbia was so much startled by the abruptness of the address, that not one of the comforting commonplaces she had applied to Connor *would* come into her mind; she could think of nothing to do but to stretch out both her hands towards him.

"Do you know," she whispered, as he grasped them convulsively, "that I could not weep when my father died? I am afraid I did not love him at all as I ought. I have so often wished it had been different. The only thing I can remember about him is, that when he tried to kiss me I used to cry and hide my face. I have often been sorry to think of that since."

"You understand how it is with me, then, and you are sorry for me?"

"Yes, indeed I am."

"I could not have told this to anyone but you; and

now, since I have your sympathy, I shall be able to bear it. What you have said has done me more good than I could have believed possible."

"Has it? I am so very, very glad."

The sound of John's footsteps approaching the door made them aware that they were holding each other's hands still. Lesbia snatched hers away and ran breathless up stairs to bed.

Perhaps it was just that last ten minutes that made the whole evening so memorable to Lesbia.

"What you have said has done me more good than I could have believed possible."

She could not go to sleep for a long time from repeating those words over and over again to herself, and for feeling the tingling in her fingers that Pelham's close clasp had left. Bride, who had her own troubles to think over, could not understand what made the child so restless.

### CHAPTER III.

"The land that I fly from is fertile and fair,  
And more than I ask for or wish for is there ;  
But *I* must not taste the good things that I see,  
There's nothing but rags and green rushes for me."

IRISH REAPER'S HARVEST HYMN.

"It is a dismal place," John explained to Lesbia. "I don't know how we can let them go into it while we live here. Bride finds fault with Castle Daly ; but, I tell you, it's a palace compared with the other house. A long, low, shambling, barrack-like building, with paintless doors and windows, and endless low passages reeking with damp. The O'Roones have been living in half a dozen rooms, and of course they allowed every kind of dilapidation to prevail, and rubbish to accumulate, in the other parts of the house. One does not know whether to wonder most at the folly of building such a mansion in that out-of-the-world nook, or the stupidity of letting it rot to pieces once it was there."

“Connor was talking to me about Eagle’s Edge the other day,” remarked Lesbia. “He had a great deal to say about the grand entertainments—feasting all the squires of County Galway—that his grandfather and great-grandfather used to hold there. And there are stories about the place too—dreadful stories of fatal duels fought across tables in the dining-rooms; and of smugglers from the coast coming and hiding in the old cellars and passages that lead to nothing, and startling the ladies, who knew nothing of what was going on, with wild banshee cries, and mysterious flittings to and fro of nights. I should be frightened out of my wits to spend a winter in such a place; but I don’t believe Ellen will mind; and Connor likes it—he would far rather live there than in a commonplace comfortable house.”

“I can quite believe it of him; but his indifference to decency does not, I trust, extend to the rest of the family. I should not have suspected Pelham of sympathizing with the insane vanity that values itself on having spendthrift ancestors, and living in houses stained with their crimes. Yet he looked, I thought, rather blank yesterday evening, when, after letting him know the state of the roof at Eagle’s Edge, I advised him to give up all thought of inhabiting that lonely spot, and content himself with a house in Ballyowen.”

"John, you had the cruelty?"

"Cruelty!"

"Yes, to expect the Dalys to come down to living in a house in a town."

"Why not, if the town house is the best place to live in?"

"If I were they, I would rather bear anything than lower the dignity of the family in the district where for so many centuries they have been looked up to as kings and queens."

"Pinchbeck dignity, if it wants a pile of mouldy bricks to perch upon. I am sorry you are adopting such notions, Lesbia."

"I'm not adopting them, I have had them always. There have been times, and times long before I ever saw the Dalys, when I sat on those conservatory steps at Uncle Maynard's, and wished I could wish myself into a descendant of a noble family."

"Natural aspirations for a school-girl, but too senseless to be tolerated in anyone who has passed beyond that gushing period of existence."

"I feel the same still, however. I am often unhappy to think that no Thornley ever did anything interesting, and that Uncle Maynard made all the money he left me in business."

"Honestly—which certainly gives you much less right to be proud of it, than if one of your ancestors had stolen it from somebody else five or six hundred years ago."

"You are dreadfully prosaic and tiresome, John. Sometimes I hate to talk to you. One is obliged to hide one's real feelings when you are in your hard moods. It is like bruising oneself against a rock to speak to you on a subject one has at heart. One feels like a little bird, or a butterfly, that flings itself against a window-pane, thinking it free air, and falls back wounded."

"Lesbia, that saying is not original—you are quoting from somebody else; I am certain of it. Come, tell me at once who said that first, and on what occasion was I guilty of the bruising some one has accused me of."

"It is my own opinion of you, indeed, John; but I believe it was Ellen Daly who said it. It was two evenings ago, after she had been talking to you about trying to get the old woman released from prison, who won't answer the questions the lawyers want her to answer, about things that happened on the night of Mr. Daly's murder. She did not tell me how you had vexed her; but, when we went up stairs together, she walked up and down my room for an hour in such a state of mind, sometimes talking against you, with her eyes flashing. You would have been surprised to see it."

“No, I have seen her eyes flash.”

“And sometimes breaking down, and crying for her father as if her heart would burst. Bride heard our voices, and came in and took Ellen away. She said it was very Irish, all of it, and that I had better not have argued.”

“What did you argue about?”

“Why you, of course; I could not help standing up for you, and, when she accused you of being hard-hearted, reminding her of all the trouble you take, and how hard you are working to arrange their affairs, and make things better for them all. I repeated what Sir Charles Pelham said in his last letter, about the immense obligation all the family are under to you. She did not attempt to contradict that; she only cried.”

“Hum! A rock, I think you said—and then a window-pane. I suspect you have involved the metaphors.”

“John, I do believe, at the bottom of your heart you are vexed at my repeating this conversation, though you asked for it.”

“I am not in the least degree vexed; only I shall be obliged to you for the future, when you hear me abused, not to throw into people’s teeth imaginary obligations, for which, as I should like them to know, I do not claim the slightest gratitude.”

“Oh, John! when you are working yourself almost

to death, and doing so much more for them than any of their own relations."

"It interests me simply as business. If I undertake a thing I like to go through with it. You might take an opportunity of mentioning that to Miss Daly; for as to misusing any influence I may happen to have in this odd country to impede the ends of justice, I simply shall not do it, however often she asks me. Her own father's murderers! Certainly, I don't understand how a sentiment of gratitude towards the old witch who brought her to that horrible night watch should obscure her desire for justice on them. It seems out of all proportion."

"If she believed that they had meant to kill her father, she would be bitter enough against them; but you know she thinks ——"

"Yes, I understand, that an attempt on my life is no such great matter—only a perhaps not quite laudable attempt to put an obnoxious person out of the way. Yet, let my life be ever so worthless in her eyes, one would think she might allow the crime to be hateful. It's the way, however, with everybody here. Sentiment is everything, and there is literally no respect for law or justice anywhere."

"Ellen Daly does not think your life of no consequence; no one could think so *now*."



"I should very much like to have an explanation of that *now*."

"Well, I mean now, when all the chief people of the neighbourhood are beginning to find out how superior you are, and when Sir Charles Pelham keeps sending you such flattering letters, and so many of our relations in England, who had forgotten us, are claiming our acquaintance and making a fuss."

"In fact, *now*, when I have the honour of being guardian to Miss Maynard and her eight thousand a year. Well, I suppose *we* are not a sentimental family. Your candid moments certainly don't reveal any high-flown delicacy that one need be afraid of bruising. You had better run away now, for I am busy; and here comes Bride, in time to help me to look over the builder's estimate of repairs once more. Where are those papers, Bride?"

"Pelham Daly carried them off rather in a pet, I thought. You told him, last night, there was no use in going further into them, and that he and his mother must give up all thought of inhabiting Eagle's Edge. Have you heard anything to alter your opinion?"

"No—but——"

"Ah, John, you don't find your second family of bankrupt orphans so easy to manage as your first; and, I must say, you don't show yourself so competent to the task as


you did of old. There was no hesitation for us when a disagreeable thing had to be done. Steady, right-about-face—dragons if dragons are in the way—march into their mouths; such were the orders you gave us in the old times. There was no compromise about you then; and that was what I, for one, liked, and what carried us through.”

“If a big boy will wear a little coat, and a little boy a big coat, and neither of the fools is my brother, I have less authority than Cyrus to make them change their habits. I growl, but I am obliged to let each take his way.”

“You will let the Dalys take their way about the big house then?”

“I don’t see where the money for the necessary repairs is to come from; but I presume it will have to be found if they won’t live anywhere else. There is no doubt, I suppose, that all the family wish to live at Eagle’s Edge.”

“Mrs. Daly seems to have only two wishes left—to please her eldest son, and to live in a house that belonged to her husband. Poor woman! she never would let him have any peace in his own houses while he lived, and, now he has gone, she seems disposed to make a religion of being miserable herself in the precise spot where she would not allow him to be happy.”



"In Mrs. Daly's case, you cannot label the sentiment 'Irish,' and dismiss it forthwith as unworthy of consideration."

"I sympathize with it none the less. I wish people could be content to make their friends happy while they have them, and when they are dead ——"

"Forget them comfortably."

"No, mourn them in a reasonable way."

"I don't think, if I were dead, I should object to be mourned as Mr. Daly is mourned by some. However, that is nothing to us. Eagle's Edge is five miles distant from Castle Daly, and the road is dreadful. We shall see very little of them this winter, if they settle there. So much the better for us."

"Ah, you are beginning to see, then, that I was not so very far wrong in warning you about Lesbia. You will reconcile yourself the more easily to what has happened since you left home yesterday. The Dalys have taken their departure."

"Left the house without waiting for my return—you can't mean it!"

"I do. Pelham spoke to me early this morning of his mother's wish to leave Castle Daly at once. He said he had been telling her of the difficulties you saw in the way of their removal to Eagle's Edge, and that, since they

could not have a house of their own immediately, she had decided on accepting an invitation from Anne O'Flaherty to stay at the Hollow."

"That child Lesbia has been giving herself airs, then."

"No, I don't think so. She may long sometimes to enter on the full sweets of ownership here; but she has too much good feeling and affection for the Dalys to show them a glimpse of such a wish. It was just a spurt of unprovoked pride on the part of young Daly; and, by the way, John, if you think you are going to rule him with a rod of iron, and turn him out after any pattern you please, I fancy you will find yourself mistaken. He is very proud, and since he cannot prevent our living in his house, he has made up his mind to be very distant and haughty towards us. You should have seen him standing there, on the hearth-rug, making known his intentions to me, and pointedly ignoring Lesbia, who sat all the time crouched on a footstool, with a screen before her face, very much disposed to pout at not being referred to, but too frightened to put in a word. Poor fellow! I was sorry for the signs of sore hurt feeling that peeped out in all he said. It's not an agreeable experience for anyone to come down in the world, and the kind of people who won't be content with taking their fall in one

good shock, but must be for ever casting themselves down from imaginary heights and breaking their bones over again, certainly make the most of it."

"I wish you had dissuaded them from leaving so hastily. How was I to guess that my innocent proposition of the semi-detached villa would be looked on as an insult, and put them all to flight?"

"I said what I could; but Miss Daly excused their haste by putting it on her mother's dread of excitement, and fear that a crowd from the villages round would collect to see them drive away, if the time of their departure was known long beforehand. I suppose two or three hundred people can howl louder than fifty, or I should say we did not gain much by our haste. I thought I had been cautious, and allowed no suspicion of what was afoot to get abroad. Yet, no sooner was the carriage ordered, than three or four of the servants darted off full speed to carry the tidings to all the cabins near, and by the time the preparations were made, and Mrs. Daly ready to start, the front garden, from the steps to the gate, was crowded with people on the watch. The instant the front door opened, and Mrs. Daly and Ellen appeared, they fell down on their knees. John, I never saw such a sight—the men swaying themselves backwards and forwards, and howling and wringing their hands as wildly as the women, all in

a moment; and in the midst of the weeping, one fellow sprang to his feet, and rushing up to Mrs. Daly, lifted his hand, and swore a horrible oath of vengeance against the murderer for his blunder. That was the word—I heard it. He looked so wild and savage, and such a strange expression of remorse crossed his face, when a corner of Mrs. Daly's wide crape mantle touched him, that, if I had been a magistrate, I should have taken him into custody as an accomplice on the spot."

"But, what a shock for Mrs. Daly! how did they all bear it?"

"Pelham put his arms round his mother, and lifted her into the carriage in a fainting state, and Ellen, who was behind, lifted her veil, and to my amazement laid her hand on the swearing man's arm and addressed him by name. I could not hear what she said, for at the sight of her face a perfect howl of grief broke out, and there was a rush from all parts of the garden to get near enough to the steps to exchange a word with her—shrill women's voices invoking blessings on her from every saint in the calendar, and begging her to speak just a word—to let them hear her voice again telling them she would never desert them."

"How long did all this go on?"

"Hardly a minute: Pelham called impatiently from the

carriage, and Ellen, after trying hard to get out a word, turned round, and while all the people looked on, threw her arms round Lesbia's neck and kissed her twice: then she pushed her gently forwards to the front of the steps, where she herself had been standing, and got into the carriage. The people made way quietly for the horses to move on, and I was astonished to see how ready they were to take up and understand Miss Daly's little pantomime, I confess I did not comprehend what she meant to say to them by it, till I saw the impression her action made on the crowd. There had been some angry looks directed towards Lesbia and me, and mutterings about proud Englishers and upstarts, but Ellen's kiss changed the people's temper towards us at once. Poor little Lesbia was crying, partly from sympathy, and partly from nervousness, and when Ellen pushed her forward, she took out her handkerchief and buried her face in it and sobbed. The most eloquent speech ever spoken would not have enlisted these strange, excitable people's sympathies so strongly in her favour as that sight did. 'Look at her,' I heard the women standing near say: 'it's breaking her heart she is to see them turned out. The darlint young lady, wid riches and beauty, and luck that bates iverything in the world ye iver heard of. She can't enjoy it at all, for thinking of the wrong done to them

that have to go. A tinder heart she has, be sure. The blessed saints grant her grace to do the right thing, and bring the true owners back to reign over us.' I am afraid an obvious method of bringing the true owners back occurred to every man, woman, and child in the assembly, when Connor leaned quite out of the carriage window, just as it reached the gate, to take a last look at the house, and wave another good-bye to us on the steps. He is looked up to as the representative of the family instead of Pelham."

"What impression do you suppose this scene made on Lesbia? She was talking to me for a quarter of an hour just now, and said nothing about it."

"There are odd little reserves about Lesbia every now and then, and I observe it most where the Dalys are concerned. She pretends to be annoyed; but I believe that Ellen Daly's conduct in putting her forward secretly gave her extreme pleasure, and that she looks upon it as a sort of resignation of sovereignty in her favour, almost as good as a patent of nobility elevating her into an *ould* family on the spot. You won't find her the easier to manage for it. I only hope she won't consider that '*noblesse oblige*,' and marry Connor Daly, in order not to disappoint the public opinion of the 'tinderness' of her heart."



"I begin to think I was a great fool for consenting to stay here."

"I don't think it—I know it."

"So the house is empty, and Lesbia's reign begun."

"I don't know what you mean by empty. There is one person more in it than there was all last year, when you professed to find it full enough."

"It is a comfort to know that the old furniture will have to stay just where it is till the house at Eagle's Edge is ready to receive it. Lesbia's hands will be stayed. We are respited from French looking-glasses and ormolu for the present."

"There is a greater similarity between Lesbia's taste and yours than you give her credit for; she was congratulating herself on the same subject half an hour ago. I cannot profess to sympathize with either of you. Battered chairs and faded carpets and hangings have no charms for me, and would not have, if it could be proved that they had come straight from Tara's halls, and countless generations of O'Connors and O'Neills had had the spoiling of them. I confess to a feminine longing for things of our own; they need not be looking-glasses and ormolu. Why should we not succeed in creating an appropriate, characteristic Thornley home out of this house?"

"It will come to that, I suppose, in time ; but I wonder why we were in such haste to alter the appearance of this room when we first began to inhabit it. We should have shown better taste, I think, if we had left things as we found them. The oil-painting, for example, that used to hang opposite Mr. Daly's arm-chair : I happened to see it the other day when I went up into the attics, and I really think we were hasty in banishing it from the room. We will have it back in its old place for the few weeks longer we can keep it."

"My dear John!—that pink and white monstrosity with the impossible yellow hair!"

"Not so impossible when one knows what it was meant for."

"You happened to see it ! It had its face to the wall, and all my trunks and Lesbia's were piled in front of it."

"Very well, then, if you must have the exact truth, I went up to the attic on purpose to look at it. I moved the trunks and lifted it out, and thought the sight repaid me for my trouble. There, now, sneer at my taste as much as you please, but admire my candour."

"I have not spirit to sneer. I am wondering whether there is not something intoxicating in the air of this country which mounts up into people's heads and makes them sentimental against their nature. Shall I be able

to withstand it myself in the long run? I dread to find myself lost in admiration before a picture of Darby O'Roone. Will you let me have one to match your 'Colleen Bawn' when you hang her up again?"

"Certainly, if you set your heart upon it; though I say I can't see the point of your suggestion."

## CHAPTER IV.

“The fishes flete with new repaired scale ;  
The adder all her slough away she flings ;  
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale ;  
The busy bee her honey now she mings ;  
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale ;  
And thus I see among these pleasant things  
Each care decays ; and yet my sorrow springs !”

SURREY.

“THE winter is over and gone ; the time of the singing of birds is come.” The triumphant notes of a skylark raining music from the heights of a cloudless April sky brought these words into Ellen Daly's mind as she stood one morning, six months after her father's death, in the garden before Eagle's Edge, shading her eyes with her hands from the morning sunshine, and watching the receding figure of her brother Pelham as it dwindled to a speck in the distance of the winding road towards which her face wast turned. When she had seen him grow into a black speck no longer distinguishable from the peat piles

that bordered the road, she intended to return to the house and tell her mother that she had kept him in view through just so many minutes of his daily absence, and thus lessen by a second or two the agony of restless anxiety in which Mrs. Daly now consumed every hour that her eldest son spent away from her.

It was a daily small boon to Ellen to have this good reason for breathing the air outside the house and looking around her.

"The winter is over and gone : the time of the singing of birds is come." The time for fresh beginnings—for some new hope to stir under the ice-crust of the old sorrow. Was it most pain or joy to find oneself alive, still feeling, still capable of seeing beauty and joy in the world, after a blow that seemed at first as if it ought to kill you ?

Ellen lingered a moment or two to debate this question with herself, as, having lost sight of Pelham, she raised her eyes to follow the lark's flight upwards into the wide blue.

"The time of the singing of birds is come"—the time when nature calls aloud to us and bids us awaken out of the deadness of personal grief, and rejoice in the new manifestation of His beauty that God is making to the world. "Behold, *I* am alive for evermore, and the dead

live to *Me*." Was not this the secret saying which the new verdure was writing all over the hills, and which the young pattering leaves and singing-birds were repeating in music ? It must be well to have ears to hear and a heart that could respond with a little flutter of returning joy and thankfulness.

What Ellen saw when she called back her eyes from the heights to which her messenger of hope had carried them, and looked round her, was a wide solitary stretch of grassy valley reaching up to slopes of bare green hills that on every side shut out the distance. A narrow stony road, twisting in and out among the bog with the devious curves of a river, wound through the valley to the two passes between the hills which afforded exit to the world beyond.

Other landmarks were few and far between. Here and there the monotonous green surface was broken by black ridges, and dark, shining pools of peaty water, flanked by conical brown hillocks where the newly-cut turf was piled to dry in the spring sun ; here and there on the lower slopes of the hills, or down in a hollow of the turf cuttings, the grey stone walls and peat-thatched roof of a cabin with a thin blue cloud of smoke hanging round its eaves, might be discerned. Far in the distance, at the head of the valley, a whitewashed farmhouse showed conspicuous, being distinguished far and wide by the little

plantation of wind-grieved aspens and elms that sheltered it and made it the boast of the district.

Faint signs of life and stir came thence to greet Ellen's eyes and ears with tokens of human neighbourhood. The bark of a sheep-dog from the hill ; the flutter of a woman's red petticoat, contrasted against the green of the sloping field whence she was driving her cow home ; the figure of an old man with a great creel of turf on his back, toiling up the steep path to the open door. Further away still in an opposite direction, could be seen a barefooted girl with a ragged black cloak on her head, making her way over the swamp through a tall patch of reeds towards the house. She was the first-comer that morning of the numerous pensioners from the neighbouring cabins who had been dependent through the bitter winter on Ellen's charity to keep them from actual starvation. Was the winter over and gone ? It had been a time of terrible suffering ; but surely the worst must be past now. Here was spring, with seed-time come again, and, by and by, a harvest of plenty perhaps to wipe out the memory of the privations it had been such misery to witness during the past months. There could be no wiping out of the grief that shadowed her own household ; but there might come, what Ellen told herself would be infinite relief—leisure to dwell with her sorrow in peace, and weave it into her life

so that the sense of loss should not overshadow the bright memory of the love that had gone before.

As Ellen turned to re-enter the house, she looked at it with more desire to find it home-like than she had allowed herself to feel hitherto.

It was a long, low, grey stone building, in the main part only one story high, but breaking out at each end into ramifications too shapeless to be called wings, which asserted their independence of the original design of the builder by rising to various heights one behind the other. The front and back doors were exactly opposite each other, and standing wide open, Ellen, as she walked up the garden path, could see through the house to the farmyard beyond, where a barefooted girl, late as was the hour, was milking a cow in a shed; and a boy, open-mouthed and round-eyed, stared back at Ellen while he mechanically worked the pump-handle up and down, heedless that the water had long since overflowed the pail, and was making streams and puddles all over the yard, to the manifest disgust of an old sow and her piglings, which testified their disapproval by a chorus of gruntings. The farmyard was inclosed by a rudely-built stone fence; and beyond it lay a deeply-shaded grassy ravine, sloping upward between the sides of two hills, and widening at its highest point into a deep hollow, once the basin of a mountain tarn, now a



miniature valley, green with the vivid tints of moss and uncut bog vegetation. Behind it again, a foil to its gem-like green lustre, rose the bare, stony peak of one of the Maam Turk mountains, that thrust its dark shoulder forward towards the lower range of brightly-coloured hills, like an angry giant frowning down on the sport of pigmies. Ellen's eyes sought this mountain head, and dwelt upon it in preference to any other feature of the landscape; for, softened by distance, it had formed one of the range of purple peaks she had been used to watch from the school-room window at Castle Daly.

The daily little crowd of pensioners had begun to gather round the backdoor of the house when Ellen entered the Hall; and this year it was real misery, too grim for cajolery and adroit flattery, that had to be dealt with. The girl Ellen had seen running through the bog had just gained the house, and was leaning against the side of the door, pale and panting after her run, and fixing craving eyes that looked out of large black hollows on a plate of crusts of bread and cheese rinds, the remnants of yesterday's supper, that stood on the kitchen dresser. Ellen emptied the food into her trembling, outstretched hands, before she turned aside to go to her mother's room, and she tried not to see that two emaciated women, with babies in their arms, and a lame beggarman, who had

settled themselves patiently on the door-sill to await her leisure, looked with jealous disapproval at the lavishness which gave such coveted treasures into one hand.

Mrs. Daly was waiting for the little scrap of news of Pelham almost as eagerly as the beggars were waiting for their dole of food.

Had Ellen seen him safe to the turn in the road ? Which horse was he riding ? Not the one that had stumbled yesterday ! Had he looked himself to the fastening of the saddle-girths ?—remembering Patsy's stupidity,—and that there was no one else in the stable now. And, above all, what had Ellen given him for breakfast, and had he eaten heartily ?

A look of reproach came into Mrs. Daly's eyes with the last question, for she suspected Ellen of encouraging Pelham in a habit he had fallen into lately of eating sparingly, that there might be more food for Ellen to divide among her pensioners when he had ridden away. She was willing to suffer herself with the starving people ; but it was quite beyond her strength to endure the thought of Pelham suffering, and her grudge against the authors of his self-denial showed itself each day in reluctance to spare Ellen when the hour for the distribution of food came.

"What, again to-day ?" she said, as Ellen prepared to leave the room. "Are they all collecting again here to-

day? You promised at first that it should be only three times a week."

"Yes, but the distress increases so terribly fast, and we can give so little. It would not be safe to trust them with more than one day's allowance of food now. Even Mr. Thornley allowed that. He said it was necessary to let them come every day—he did, indeed, mamma."

"But he told you, at the same time, about the soup-kitchens opened at Maam and Ballyowen, and said it was on the whole best to trust to the public relief."

"In most cases, but not for the sick and old about here, who have no one to send so far. Even Mr. Thornley gave them leave to come to me."

"I don't know why you say *even* Mr. Thornley, Ellen, as if you were adopting the poor people's prejudices against him. Why does he stay here, but for pity and charity. The Thornleys have no ties to the place. They are free to go and spend their money in England, and escape the sight of all the misery here, if they please."

"I wonder if they could go away and forget it. I know what I should think of them if they did."

"You are unreasonable, Ellen. I don't want to be hard, but there are thoughts that wipe out pity. I, at least, can't feel that all the suffering is unmerited. Crimes call down

vengeance, and I can't be surprised, that where such wrong has been done there should be misery."

Ellen turned away, seeing how her mother's lips closed in a hard, stern line as she finished speaking, and what a grim look of pain settled on her face. There was nothing more to be said. Yet, when she had reached the door, a sudden impulse made her come back and kneel down by her mother's side.

"Mamma," she said, in a quick, frightened whisper, "that is what they think themselves—many of our neighbours here; and it leaves them no hope. The autumn before last, when other places suffered from the blight, this neighbourhood and Anne's Valley were spared. It was not till after that night that the blight fell here. They think he cursed them when he was dying; that it was his blood crying up to Heaven that brought destruction down on their fields; but we know better. I think sometimes that he would come back to help them if he might, he was so pitiful."

A quiver passed over Mrs. Daly's face; but she tried to keep her voice steady.

"Why do you tell me this?" she said. "I believe they are right, but I cannot be pitiful."

"It makes you more sorry for them, does it not?"

"I don't know why it should. I have my share of

suffering, which you seem to forget. I see Pelham's face and yours growing thinner and paler every day. Those other mothers outside, who have known all their lives what it is to see their children want, and are used to it, are not worse off than I. One's heart can only be full of pain."

"Come to the kitchen with me this morning, and see the other mothers. You can sympathize with them better than I, and they will take it as a sign of forgiveness."

Mrs. Daly stooped down and kissed Ellen's pleading face, while her own softened.

"Some day," she said; "but I am not strong enough to make such an exertion to-day. Go to your people, and I will try not to grudge what you and Pelham give up for them again."

When Ellen entered the kitchen, and saw the stores for distribution that had arrived that morning by a special messenger from Castle Daly, she was disposed to repent of her disparaging mention of the Thornleys.

There were large basins of Indian meal porridge, ready cooked, to secure its being properly used, and rice, weighed out in separate doles, and small cans of soup for the sick. Some one at Castle Daly was anxious to spare her perplexity and trouble—yes, and to secure that the distribution should be made with the strict impartiality and the precautions against waste, on which the Thornleys laid such

stress amid their charity. Ellen added this remark as she read the careful directions, in Bride Thornley's neat handwriting, that accompanied the gifts. Such care might be absolutely necessary ; but Ellen was not reasonable, and bitter thoughts kept rising in her heart, as she carried on her morning's task of distributing according to Bride's views. She had never acted the part of doler of other people's charity before : she had always hitherto been free to follow the instincts of her own lavish nature, and she could not put herself and her own feelings out of sight as completely as in like circumstances Bride Thornley would have put hers. She could not get it out of her head that it was want of generosity and delicacy in the Thornleys not to leave her free while acting for them. Would not she in Bride Thornley's place have been lavish to anyone in hers ?

Her secret discontent was spoken out loudly and exaggerated by the recipients of her bounty. They loathed the novel food prepared for them in a way they did not understand, and craved for a morsel of the diet they were accustomed to, with a sick longing painful to witness. It might be a want of generosity on her part—Ellen's conscience told her it was ; but she could not help saying, in answer to an old woman's lamentation over her portion of porridge, which she declared her sick daughter could not eat—

“Well, I can’t help it, Biddy. You must go away with what you have got. It is Mr. Thornley’s bounty, not my own, I am dividing among you to-day. I have not bit or sup left of my own to give anyone.”

“Worse luck for us all, then. Sure we know it’s heart’s blood of your own you’d give us if you could; and no wonder this that comes from him has the bitter taste wid it, and no power to keep the heart up, since it’s grudging us every mouthful he is. Bad luck to him for a usurper that has shoved himself into a better man’s place.”

“No, no, Biddy, you must not speak so of Mr. Thornley; he does not grudge what he gives, and he is not a usurper. His living at Castle Daly does not injure us. I wish you could all get that out of your heads.”

The old woman drew close to Ellen, and, looking up with a cunning and savage leer into her face, whispered, “I’m not in the boys’ secrets—why would an ould crater like me be? but it’s no secret that if some one had not stood by ill-luck in his place, on a night that you know of, it’s not in Castle Daly he’d be this minute. It’s a warmer country than that, I’m thinking, that would hould him; and since he’s been due there so long, it’s little good that will follow his doings anywhere else.”

“Biddy, I wonder how you dare say such a word to me,” cried Ellen shuddering; “take up your basket and

go away, you wicked old woman. No wonder the food does not nourish you when your heart is so full of evil thoughts against the giver. Where would you and your poor little grandchildren be by to-morrow without the help you despise ? ”

“ May be wid the Holy Virgin and St. Patrick, and the blessed saints. It’s a grand entertainment they’ll have to make ready up above for all the crowds and crowds that’ll come up to them before the summer is over, and the next potatoes ripe, for they’re doing nothing at all for us down below this year. They’re forgetting us intirely. It’s no use praying to them any more ; they’re deaf, or asleep may be.”

A murmur of disapproval rose from most of the women, and Ellen said—

“ Come, Biddy, you know you are saying what is wrong. It is not the time to lose heart and leave off hoping and praying, when fine weather has come at last, and the seed is being sown that with the blessing of God will bring a good harvest, and make you all prosperous and happy again.”

“ The best harvest that ever ripened will never do that avourneen, for most of us. It’s not I that will ever trouble the Blessed Virgin or the saints wid prayers again for the pratees, for good or bad it will be all one to me.



They may do what they like for me from this time. Shure, have not ye heard that we're turned out of our holding, and that I and my dead daughter's children are sheltering wid a neighbour? My two sons have gone off to Cong to be put on the public relief. They had their wives and children of their own, and they must live, they said. I went down on my knees to Mr. Thornley to let us keep the bit of a roof over our heads, and the ground for the pratees, and be put on the works all the same, but the saints could not be deafer than he was. He said it was dead against a new law they've been making against us up in London. The Lord reward him that made it for what they've done, wid him that carries it out. It's not likely we'll eat with many thanks the starving morsel that keeps us alive to make beggars of us for ever."

"It sounds very hard, but if it's the law, I suppose Mr. Thornley could not help acting on it. When better times come we shall be able to put your sons back into their little bit of ground, perhaps."

Biddy shook her head despondingly, and took up her basket, and Ellen turned to speak to a group of women who were still lingering round the doorway, and who had testified their disapproval of Biddy's disparaging remarks on the saints by much crossing of themselves and many ejaculations.

"Well, Mrs. Kelly," she began, "did you manage the walk to Cong last market-day, and buy the potatoes for your garden with the money I gave you? I hope you have not delayed. The price of seed-potatoes increases every day, I hear, and yet it won't do to lose hope and leave the ground unsown."

"Indeed, and you're right, lady; if it had not been for the blessed hope we have in what the saints will do for us yet, I'd never have been able to drag myself to Cong, the weary way that seems to have stretched out double since our troubles began. Yes, I bought the pratees, and dragged 'em back with me, thinking each one of 'em worth gould; for indeed I'd seen a thing done by the boy that sold 'em such as I'll warrant was never done in Ireland before; there was a crowd of poor people round the scales in the market-place, clamouring to get the first turn; and when my turn came, the sack was nearly empty. The boy that was selling shot out what was left of the pratees into the scale: and, will ye believe it, lady, there was one over-weight, and he took it back again and put it into his pocket. One potato! It's that we've come to in Ireland now, to be grudging each other the matter of one potato. How will it end at all?"

"And I hope, Mary Joyce, you were one of the early-comers and secured your share. You must not spend the

half-crown I gave you on anything but seed-potatoes for your garden; remember that. I have no more half-crowns to give away, I can assure you."

The two women looked sheepishly at each other, and the younger took up the corner of her head shawl and began to twist it round her fingers.

"I wish I had waited till your husband came back, Mary," said Ellen, reproachfully. "I am afraid you are not to be trusted; how angry he will be if you have thrown away your last chance of next year's harvest."

"Well then, I'll spake for her," put in Mrs. Kelly, "for it's nothing she need be ashamed of she's done; and we won't tell a lie about a holy thing. We're neighbours, and we agreed together afther your goodness hearing our prayers and giving us the money that day. Shure, we said, it's not the pratees in themselves that'll be any help to us, it's a blessing to keep them from rotting in the ground we want beyant anything: so I wid my share of the money went to Cong to buy all the pratees I could for the two of us, and she wid hers set out on a pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Well to buy a bottle of holy water from a holy man that's come there to bless the water against the disease. It's only a slip of our gardens we've been able to plant this year, that's true, but shure we know that what is in it is safe; and seeing we have not begrudged the holy water

and the prayers, may be the pratees will grow quite beyant our hopes, and have twice as many roots to them as if they had not been blessed. Why would not they, since there's a God above all?"

"I'm afraid you have been deceived, Mrs. Kelly. He could not be a holy man who sold you the water on such a pretence; and surely you know better than to think you can buy a blessing for money."

"Would you have us grudge paying for it, then? Would we get any good that way at all, do you think, Miss Eileen, alanna? Shure, after all the destruction we've seen wid the pratees, we would not have had the heart to turn up the ground or put the seed in if we had not had something beyant the common to trust to."

A lecture on right grounds for trust would have been ill-timed just then, even if Ellen had known how to word it; and somehow she had not the heart to quench a hope, however false its foundation, that was bringing a little glow of life again into Mary's wasted face. She had it on her lips to say, "Don't let Mr. Thornley hear what you have done, or at least take care he does not hear that I gave you the money;" for more than the loss of her last half-crown Ellen grudged to think of the triumph such an illustration of the folly of giving money to the starving people would enable him to hold over her the next time

they argued the point together. She recollected herself in time, however, to change the words into a request that at least the women would keep their own counsel, and not send their neighbours to waste their last farthing' on the holy man's doubtful wares.

They were ready enough to promise anything to pacify her now, and by degrees, though slowly, the crowd dispersed, the people moving languidly away towards the scattered cabins in the valleys and on the hill-sides, stopping often to rest by the wayside from sheer weakness. It was long past noon before the flutter of the last red petticoat disappeared at the turn of the winding road, and the scene became as solitary as when Ellen looked out over it in the early morning.

## CHAPTER V.

“The precise speculative tenets of this Brotherhood—how the Universe, and Man, and Man’s life, picture themselves to the mind of an Irish Poor Slave ; with what feelings and opinions he looks forward to the Future, round on the Present, back on the Past—it were extremely difficult to specify.”—SARTOR RESARTUS.

THE work of the day was over for Ellen when her pensioners took their departure. The rest of her time till evening had to be passed in waiting. Very dreary waiting it sometimes was, for Mrs. Daly’s nervous apprehensions on Pelham’s account always increased as the afternoon drew in ; and as she invariably began to expect his return long before he could possibly appear, Ellen had to exhaust her ingenuity in inventing satisfactory reasons to account for the supposed delay, or to weary herself in efforts to divert her mother’s attention, and persuade her that the hours would pass more quickly if she did not so often ask what o’clock it was.

One other event besides Pelham’s return might be expected to occur on alternate days, and that was the passing

of the barefooted runner who carried the post-bag between Ballyowen and Maam, and who sometimes paused to drop a package at the gate of Eagle's Edge.

It might be at one hour of the long afternoon, or it might be at another—the cross-road postman was above being tied by hours—but when there was a reasonable hope of a letter from Connor, Ellen never failed to bring her work or her book to the window-seat, and begin her watch directly after luncheon. Even when the post-carrier passed the house without stopping, he was an object of interest to Ellen, and she would close her book, or let her work fall on her knee, and follow his movements with her eyes, from the moment when she first descried him, a moving black speck on the furthest visible curve of the road, till the dusty bare feet had eaten up all its lengths and turns, and the figure disappeared again on the opposite horizon. He was the connecting link between the solitary little valley and the world beyond ; an evidence that there actually was a world beyond from which news could come ; places where the sun was shining while it rained here, where people had plenty to eat and lived free from fear, and gathered round cheerful fires in the evenings to talk and laugh and make much of each other with unanxious hearts. If not to her, to some people somewhere, words from that happy distance, soundless but full of life and hope, were

travelling in the movements of the dusty feet she watched ; and there was a great deal of comfort for Ellen in the thought.

The April day when Ellen had had so much talk with her pensioners brought her a share of the pleasure her liberal fancy bestowed every day on other people.

When the runner came to a certain point in the road, which Ellen always saw him approach with anxiety, his pace slackened, he came to the wished-for halt, fumbled for a minute or two among his rags as if he were in search of something, and then set off at a swinging trot down the path that connected Eagle's Edge with the main road through the valley. Ellen was at the garden gate long before he reached it, in spite of the great show of speed he put into his movements, and held out a cup of milk with a spoonful of whisky in it, in return for the packet he thrust breathlessly towards her—an effectual bribe to memory which in these famine times, when every extra step was painful labour, she thought it wise to administer.

The man leaned, panting, against the stone wall, while he drained the cup.

“The Lord reward ye for that for iver and iver,” he said, in a hoarse whisper, as he handed it back. “It’s good stuff intirely you’ve given me, and the first sup of dacent food that has passed my lips since I stood here last. May



St. Peter hear me that says it, and be ready at the gate of heaven wid the keys to let you in quicker than another, on account of your coming wid that to meet me at this gate to-day, for indeed I don't know that I'd have lived to the end of my journey widout it, I'm that wake wid the fast-ing. See, I've brought you two to-day, a thick letter and a bit of a newspaper folded up."

Ellen eagerly examined the writing on the covers; and the man stood still, watching the changes on her face with a sympathy that robbed his scrutiny of all impertinence.

"And, indeed," he said at last, "I'm thinking he's a lucky boy that penned the strokes there. I wish, wid all my heart, he was to the fore instead of meself, to see the power they have. Shure I'd give you ivery letter and paper that all the bags on my back hould if only each one of thim would give you a minute's pleasure like that I see on your face."

"The letter is from my brother, Tim, and I hope it brings us good news of him; it's the first you have brought me this week," said Ellen. "You had better run on. I dare not ask you to come in and rest, for you are very late to-day. The people at Maam will complain of you if you are too unpunctual, and it would never do for you to lose your post this year."

“ And indeed it would not, whin the farthing of money I get by running my heart out is all that stands betwixt us and starvation. It's Death I'm running away from, every step of the road ; and faith, it's such a near shave that I'd be glad to let him git hould of me and end it, if there was none but meself depinding on meself. He need not be in such a hurry, for he'll have it all his own way in these parts soon, I'm thinking.”

The man ended his sentence in a sort of murmur, as he unfolded his arms from the top of the wall, and prepared to set forth again, with the look of quiet, acquiescing despondency on his face which Ellen was beginning to notice as the prevailing expression on most faces that came across her now.

Mrs. Daly, who was rather more unwell than usual that day, had been dozing in her chair when Ellen left the sitting-room, and was still asleep when she returned. It was quite as well, Ellen thought, to have the opportunity of examining Connor's packages without her mother's anxious eyes scanning her face as she read. Connor was not a particularly prudent or thoughtful correspondent, and could never be made to recollect that the amusing stories of scrapes and adventures that glided glibly off his pen were apt to produce a more serious impression at home and be longer remembered there than he intended. Yet, though

he had not become more prudent or less outspoken, Ellen gathered from his letters that the months of private sorrow and public calamity that had passed over his head since they parted had not been without their effect on his character. He was certainly changed, in so far, at least, that a great deal in him which she had formerly attributed to mere boyish love of excitement and a spirit of contradiction, was settling down into a fixed enthusiasm, and a real, if wild and unpractical, purpose. Ellen did not believe that his present associates, and the political schemes of which his mind seemed full, were safe friends and desirable interests for him to have taken up ; but he had taken them up in full earnest now, and she could not help liking the reality better than the pretence. She was often startled at sentences in his letters that alluded to future possible dangers, and to schemes that sounded like midsummer madness to her ; but she hoped she might put a good deal down to Connor's imagination, which was sure, she thought, to overleap by a long way other people's purposes. More than once she made up her mind to write an earnest remonstrance, and then, looking over the letter that had frightened her, she would come upon some sentence—a line quoted from one of his friends' poems, a paragraph in a speech—to which her whole heart rose up in response, and the sheet that had been meant to condemn was written


over with warm sympathy and admiration. The reading of Connor's letters, and of the newspapers that accompanied them, had been going on for some months now, and as Ellen only read one side, they were having a sensible effect upon her. She hardly knew, indeed, the hold which this literature was gaining over her mind, or how the glamour of eloquent words playing round half-defined projects dazzled her sober judgment. It might be a will-o'-the-wisp hope, but in the darkened horizon it was the only light visible, and she could not keep her eyes from turning towards it.

When everybody was desponding it was something to hear of young, warm hearts beating with high purpose still ; of brains that had energy to plan ; of spirits, burning with indignation, that refused to acquiesce in the inevitableness of calamity. Their indignation might be ill-directed and ill-timed ; it might be unjust to attribute any part of the sufferings of the nation to wrong-doing on the side of its rulers, but the very fact of so attributing it seemed an opening to hope. The blame and the anger were a little ease to the dull, dumb ache of despair. Ellen had come to look forward to the reading of Connor's letters as to a stimulant which gave her energy to bear the pain of the misery thickening around her without sinking under the burden. The sheets Tim had brought to-day were more closely

written even than usual, and there was a folded newspaper to be examined afterwards. Ellen softly built up the sods of turf on the hearth, and then, as clouds were gathering over the sky, and the light was waning, she drew her seat close to the window and began to read. The first page was a soberly-written account of every-day proceedings, such as might be read to Mrs. Daly without exciting her nervous fears. Was Connor growing considerate? Then came a sheet with a particular mark upon it, which Ellen seized: the dashes and blots and flying curves of the letters showed her the mood in which it had been scribbled off.

"Yes, Ellen," it began, "I have spoken to him at last, as I said I would. You must keep all that follows to yourself. My mother and Pelham will not understand it, but I want you to know the whole. This great event (it will be the turning-point of my life, the last push that has definitely launched me into a course I have been long tending towards) fell out just ten days ago, and already we are close friends and brothers. He is a more glorious fellow even than I thought him when I knew him at a distance—a fellow I could follow through life to death, and be thankful to have such a one to die for. Don't laugh at me, Ellen; don't think it's one of my old delusions. I can tell you that there are people who have so much of the

real stuff in them that the mere contagion of their enthusiasm turns pretence into earnest and pinchbeck into gold. He is one of them. Believe in me for the future, for my spirit has fastened itself on to his. D'Arcy is his Christian name—the other you know ; but I won't write it, for though we none of us are ashamed of our names, and Ireland will ring with this one before another year is out, I don't want John Thornley to get hold of it before the time ; and as you know, there is a family prejudice against it amongst ourselves. I told you, did I not, of my first meeting with him six months ago ? How one miserable day last autumn, soon after I came back to Dublin, when I was feeling utterly downhearted, as if I did not care for anything or anybody, I turned into Conciliation Hall, just for want of something to do, for the chance of hearing Dan O'Connell speak on the Relief Measures ; and how towards the end of the evening this fellow got up. I had not been caring for the thing at all till that moment. I had been feeling an angry dull indifference, as if Ireland herself might be ground to powder for all I should care, after what had been done in Hill Dennis's hut two months before ; and his words stung me to life and better thoughts again. It was not the words only, it was something in the look and gesture, reminding me every minute of my father, that took such hold on me ; and then when in



leaving the crowded hall he and I chanced to jostle each other in the doorway, and he turned and spoke and smiled, the conviction flashed on me at once that the likeness could not be an accident, but that I must have come across that son of our poor aunt Ellen's of whom we used to hear rumours now and then when we were children, but whose name had never been mentioned among us of late years. I know all the rights and wrongs of that now, and will tell you some day, and you will exonerate him from all blame as I do, and glory in the thought that some of our blood goes to the making of the man who is by and by to resuscitate Ireland. He is a great deal more like our father than either of his sons. He is a little like you, if you can imagine yourself six feet high, with broad shoulders and big hands, and a face that has a charm in it—like the Pied Piper's, in the volume of poems I brought home last spring—

‘To draw

All creatures living beneath the sun

After him, so as you never saw.’

I learned his name that night before I went back to my lodgings, and I always kept my eye on him afterwards ; but though we came into contact every now and then in public places, and several of my friends became intimate with him, I avoided being introduced to him or letting him

hear my name. You see I knew it would be all up with me if I once came near him—that I should be booked for ever for all he has gone in for; and I thought of my mother and Pelham, and of the old prejudice that has kept this one of our relations who is worth generations of Pelhams out of our house, and I hesitated to surrender myself to his influence irrevocably. It's done now, however. Ten days ago I chanced to have to wait an hour at the *Nation* office to correct the proof of a poem of mine that was to appear in the next morning's paper. He came in while I was at work, and sat down on the table where I was writing and began to talk. Before long I told him my name, and in an hour, by the time the printer's devil came up for my proof, we knew each other as well as if we had lived in the house together for years. I spend more of my time in his rooms now than in my own. The fact of my being his cousin, and of his trusting me, has altered my position with the heads of our party. I have passed the Rubicon now, you may depend upon that; and Eileen, aroon, I don't think you are the girl to think the worse of me for it, or to shrink in your heart from any consequences you may have to face on my account. I wish you could have heard a speech of D'Arcy's last night, when he told us out that he was not one of those tame moralists who hold that liberty is not



worth a drop of blood, and that if it could be proved to him that an insurrection was practicable he would vote for it that hour. Stay, I will mark the report of his speech in the *Nation* I am sending. It has just come in, and I have glanced through it ; and even tamed into black and white, the words have such a ring with them that I know what they will do to you. You will spring from your seat and begin to pace up and down the room, and your face will glow, and you will look what you are, every inch his cousin. You have a better right to feel the words than have all the other Irishwomen whom they will thrill to-day ; for, Ellen, though you will hardly understand how it can be so, they partly come from you. He was sitting in my room waiting to walk down with me to the hall where last night's meeting was held, when the post brought your weekly letter. Up to the moment of my opening and reading it, we had been talking over the quarter-acre clause in the new Relief Act, which was to be the subject of D'Arcy's speech, and as a sort of comment on its working, I read your description of the sufferings of the small holders in the valleys round Eagle's Edge. It did not strike me that there was so much in what you said—it was nothing but what we all knew (only too well), and had heard from a hundred quarters ; but perhaps in the excitement of political indignation we have not been

realizing the misery of those who are doing nothing, but suffer. At all events, your instances of what you had seen yourself seemed to move him beyond anything. Before I had read many sentences he covered his face with both his hands, and when I looked up at the end of the letter I was sorry I had looked, for the tears were streaming down between his fingers like rain. He did not speak a word to me while we were walking down to the place of meeting: his face was white, and his lips set, but I could tell by the light in his eye and the quick nervous step and the gestures of his hands, how it was working in him; and when his turn came to speak, the words that leapt out were on fire. People who have heard O'Connell in the same place in his best days say that hardly ever was there such excitement, such groans of pain, and such rage as that speech called out. He was in very low spirits himself, though, as we walked home, for he has a great dread that all the feeling and spirit of the new movement will work itself out in mere words and excited assemblies that lead to nothing. He says we have too many speakers and poets among us, and too few men of action and sound judgment; and he quoted Davis's lines—

'The tribune's tongue or poet's pen  
May sow the seed in prostrate men,  
But 'tis the soldier's sword alone  
Can reap the harvest when 'tis grown.'

Later in the evening he and I concocted a scheme together that pleases him, because it has at least a show of preparing for action in it. It was agreed among the chiefs some time ago that it would be well to send deputations about into the country to sound the people, and set some system of organization on foot. D'Arcy thinks that my knowledge of the people round Ballyowen may make it useful for him and me to go down there together and canvass that neighbourhood, making it a centre for working the west. I am trusting you more than is right in telling you all this ; but I know what you are, and I want your help. None of the people at home must know if I come to Ballyowen with him. I must keep it quiet, but, if possible, I should like to see you ; and, Ellen, I am sorry for it, but I want you to bring me some money. I'll swear to you that I have not been extravagant this time ; that I am not spending a penny on myself that I can absolutely help ; but the cause wants money, and I must take my share of expenses with the others. We shan't leave Dublin for about a week, but after that time keep your wits about you, and be on the alert to interpret any hint of my neighbourhood that I manage to convey to you. You may trust me for its coming in some guise that will not betray me to anyone but you. Only be on your guard, and don't let anything escape you." The signature

came here ; but there was still another half-sheet in a yet more hasty scrawl, that had evidently been slipped as a second thought into the envelope when it was already bursting :—

“ By the way, why won’t I kill two birds with one stone when I am at Ballyowen ? Mo Craoibhin Cno,<sup>1</sup> think of her curls, and say if this is not a good name for her, to use between us two ? Why should Pelham have it his own way all these months, and I, when a great chance like this comes to me, not put in a taste of a stratagem to spoil his game ? I vow to you, Ellen, that only this minute has the notion come to me, and though I don’t expect you to help, I take you into confidence, to put you on your honour not to hinder. I must see her, unbeknownst, when I am in her neighbourhood. She shall not have the least suspicion of my real business, I promise you, but see her I will. Where will be the sin of putting an innocent bit of blarney over her and making her believe it was the glamour of her brown eyes drew me from sober work to make a pilgrimage in disguise for the chance of looking into them, and getting a word and a smile to keep up my heart till I could come openly ? I half believe myself, as I write, that it is that, and nothing else, is bringing me to Ballyowen,

<sup>1</sup> Mo Craoibhin Cno, literally, “My cluster of nuts,” or, “My nut-brown maid.”

though the thought is only a minute old. It will be strange if I can't put it in a way that will convince her, when it has had a whole week to grow and shape itself into a fact. Unless I am very much mistaken in her, the spice of mystery and scheming that will flavour the chance-meetings we'll have, and the sly tokens I'll send her, won't be altogether displeasing, and will go a good way to put her out of conceit with old Pelham's prosy love-making. I don't think I shall tell D'Arcy of this little pendant to our plan—he is too grim in earnest to have a thought to throw away on any matter that does not advance the cause; but, between you and me, I take great credit to myself for having thought out such a neat contrivance for making love and patriotism serve each other."

Ellen smiled as she read these last words; here was a little bit of old Connor creeping up again through the seriousness he had been magnetised with. She could not help being amused; but the smile soon changed into a sigh at the prospect of the embarrassment which she foresaw would arise from this characteristic scheme of his; and she cast an anxious glance towards her mother's chair.

Mrs. Daly had taken up her knitting on awaking, and now sat with her eyes fixed on her work: her lips were moving mechanically, forming silent words as her needles clicked. Perhaps for once she was not observing how late

it was getting ; perhaps she was trying to still her heart with words of prayer as the hour of the day that always tried her most approached. Anyhow, Ellen thought it was as well not to arouse her from her meditation, which seemed an unusually peaceful one, by speaking to her. The turf fire had smouldered down to a heap of white ashes on the hearth ; but the day was warm, and it would be easy to add fuel and blow up a cheerful blaze when the sound of Pelham's horse's hoofs was heard in the distance. Ellen opened the window softly to let in the sound. She knew her mother always liked this to be done. All through the winter, when the blast from the mountain pass cut like a knife, they had kept up the practice, and now it was a soft westerly breeze laden with the earthy growing smell of coming summer, that crept in. There was a great stillness inside the house and out—a stillness that brought more of content and rest to Ellen's spirit than she had known for many a day. She recollected that she had said in the morning she believed her father would be willing to come back to help in the distress, if he could help ; and she whispered softly to herself a sentence from Connor's letter, while a soft glow of satisfaction spread itself over her face—"He is more like our father than either of his sons." With this knowledge in her mind, the world was not so very empty as it had seemed half an

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hour ago. She did not envy Connor his new friend's companionship, and had not the least desire ever to see him herself: probably the illusion would be dispelled if she did. She thought she had rather keep, as a centre for fancy to play round, this new belief that some place was made beautiful by such looks and musical by such tones as their empty house wanted. Mr. Thornley might say what he liked for the future against political agitators, and the wicked mischief they perpetrated; from henceforth she should know with what cause and with whom her heart and her most earnest aspirations went.

Having come to this conclusion, she took up the newspaper Connor had sent and began to examine it. It was too dark to make out the small print of the speech he had scored; her eye fell on some verses in a larger type in the corner of the paper, and she read on till tears came and blotted out the words.<sup>1</sup>

“Life and death are in Thy hand.

Lord, have mercy!

The Blight came down at Thy command.

Christ, have mercy!

The famine-pang and fever-pain

Tear the nation's heart in twain;

Human help is sought in vain.

Parce nobis, Domine!

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<sup>1</sup> By R. D. Williams, published in 1847.

"Loud, more loud their footsteps fall.  
Lord, have mercy !  
Heaven is one vast funeral pall.  
Christ, have mercy !  
Twin destroyers, hand in hand,  
They stalk along the blasted land.  
Who before their frown shall stand ?  
Parce nobis, Domine !

"Without a grave, like weeds to lie,  
Lord, have mercy !  
Despairing thousands wait to die.  
Christ, have mercy !  
The famished infant vainly cries,  
Its mother dead beside it lies :  
Let our anguish pierce the skies !  
Parce nobis, Domine !

"Outcast of the nations long,  
Lord, have mercy !  
We bear a foreign tyrant's wrong.  
Christ, have mercy !  
Black our fearful crime must be :  
With triple scourges lashed by Thee,  
Famine, plague, and slavery.  
Parce nobis, Domine !

"Disarmed and bleeding here apart,  
Lord, have mercy !  
A vulture preys upon our heart.  
Christ, have mercy !  
Oh, bitter is our helot gloom—  
In life no jòy, in death no tomb.  
Despair and vengeance rule the gloom.  
Parce nobis, Domine !

"Without a prayer or passing bell,  
Lord, have mercy !  
The shroudless armies hourly swell.  
Christ, have mercy !



The dying, ghastlier than the dead,  
 With blanched lips have vainly said,  
 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

Parce nobis, Domine !

"Woe ! woe ! to feel the life-blood freeze,

Lord, have mercy !

Fruitlessly, by slow degrees.

Christ, have mercy !

Oh, had we fallen on the plain,

In rapid battle swiftly slain,

We had not perished thus in vain.

Parce nobis, Domine !

" 'Their God is wroth,' our foemen say.

Lord, have mercy !

Our Father, turn Thine ire away.

Christ, have mercy !

Bid Thine angel cease to slay ;

Have mercy, Heaven, on feeble clay.

Here Thy stricken people say,

Parce nobis, Domine !

" Before the isle is all a grave,

Lord, have mercy !

Arise, mysterious God, and save.

Christ, have mercy !

But if the pestilential sun

Must see us perish one by one,

Thy hand hath made—Thy will be done.

Parce nobis, Domine !"

"Ellen, I have called you three times and you have not answered me. Don't you see that it is raining, and that the drops are beating in and drenching your face and your clothes ? No, don't shut the window—we surely must hear something of Pelham soon ; but come out of the reach of the rain to the fire, and speak to me."

Ellen started. She had not felt the splash of the rain on her face, it was already so wet with tears, or noticed the change that had rapidly come over the sky in the last hour ; and now her conscience smote her for having been so engrossed by this poetry of sorrow as to have forgotten the pain near her which it was her immediate business to soothe.

The room might be made to look a little more cheerful, at least. She sat down by the fire at her mother's feet, and began to blow up the peat-ashes and skilfully pile fresh sods, till the long, low room was filled to its furthest corner with fitful, dancing light.

"It is not really so late as it looks," she said. "The darkness has come on quite suddenly ; I was reading ten minutes ago. You have been very good, dear mamma ; you have not once asked what o'clock it was ; and now has not the time passed more quickly than usual ? Are not you surprised to find the evening here ?"

A curious smile passed over Mrs. Daly's face. She had been making a great effort over herself to control her nervousness in order to spare her daughter, and now she would have been glad if she could have completed the self-sacrifice by making the admission Ellen's eyes so coaxingly asked ; but amiable subterfuges did not come readily to her grave lips. "I am glad it has seemed short

to you," was all she could bring herself to say. "I determined not to disturb you when I saw you were reading something that interested you, but of course I knew all the time how late it was growing."

"And I have been selfish; I ought to have thought of you. But hark! there is the delightful sound of his horse's hoofs on the road. You are rewarded, for he is close at hand, and it is not really late."

"Then run, Ellen, and see that Patsey is in the way to take Pelham's horse. He will be wet through. And speak to old Bridget about getting his supper ready immediately. I hear voices in the yard; but surely Pelham cannot have brought visitors home with him when he knows we have nothing to give them to eat."

## CHAPTER VI.

"Ireland of the Holy Islands  
Circled round by misty highlands,  
Highlands of the valleys verdant,  
Valleys of the torrent argent.

"Since the trance of childhood bound me,  
I have felt thine arms around me,  
More to me than any other  
Hast thou been a nurse and mother."

J. DARCY MAGHEE.

THE Daly establishment had been reduced since the beginning of the winter by the defection of two English servants whom Mrs. Daly had brought to the new house with her, and who had been frightened away early in the year by the loneliness of Eagle's Edge and the miseries of the famine year. An anxious consultation with Ellen over ways and means had induced Pelham to persuade his mother not to replace them till the times improved, so that the kitchen regions were now only tenanted by one old woman and a girl and boy, over whose doings Ellen

was obliged to exercise active supervision to prevent her mother's notions of comfort and propriety from being outraged a dozen times a day. She made a hasty incursion into the back premises before she opened the door to Pelham and the guests he was bringing with him; called old Bridget from telling her beads in the chimney corner, and summoned Patsey and Kathleen from a flirtation in the wash-house, to attend to the business of the evening. Then she went to the front of the house and stood in the porch, holding up the stable lantern, by whose light Patsey had been doing his courtship, as a beacon to assist the visitors in their progress from the yard where they had dismounted, through the straggling wind-grieved shrubs and up the broken path to the front door. The scene had greatly changed since she had looked from the same spot in the morning. The clouds, which had lain then like silver ridges in the western sky, making a shining background for the Maam Turks to rear their dark heads against, had now spread over the whole horizon, and, swooping down the sides of the hills, filled the valley with wreaths of mist and slanting sheets of rain. It was like looking down into a chaos of seething elements; smoke and water curdled confusedly together, while the solid features of the landscape loomed through, ghostlike and dim, as if they were taking uncertain shape for the first

time from the boiling caldron of creation. Ellen was well used to the rapid changes of weather peculiar to the country, and could see almost as much to admire in the mountains when they were wrapt in rain as when they slept in peace with the sunshine on their heads. But the effect on a stranger's eyes of the mountain farm-house seen in such a storm was not cheerful.

One pair of eyes on which the lighted porch loomed as a goal, to be reached through the blinding rain barrier, grew very dark and pitiful as they looked, taking mental note of all the accessories of the picture, and putting them aside for future consideration, while their owner cautiously picked his way through the rain-pools and stones of the path.

"Yes, it is a horribly melancholy place for them to live in; you are quite right, Lesbia, we ought to try and tempt them away whenever we can."

By this time the murmur of voices close at hand had reached Ellen's ears, and she descried through the gloom two figures, one wearing a habit and lady's hat, and neither as tall as Pelham, pushing their way between the wet over-hanging shrubs. Heedless of rain and soaked gravel she ran forward to meet them.

"Is Pelham with you? Has anything happened? Speak low, the window is open, and mamma is listening," she

cried, holding out a hand vaguely towards the two, without any spoken greeting. John Thornley took the hand in his, and felt how cold and trembling it was.

"Pelham is in the yard holding his horse while Patsey puts ours into the stables, and nothing whatever is the matter," he said. "Do you never mean to see me all the rest of your life, Miss Daly, without suspecting me of being the bearer of bad news? I am afraid you must hate the sight of me."

Ellen did not suppose that it mattered much to him or anybody else whether she did hate the sight of him or not; and she was too busy greeting Lesbia to have an answer ready for this remark.

"Dear Babette, how kind of you to find your way out here in such weather. Your habit must be soaked through. Come in quickly, to the kitchen fire first if you don't mind, while I prepare mamma to see you, and tell her that Pelham is safe. It is very silly to be so nervous, I know, but I believe fear is catching, and you can't be surprised that mamma should have a dread of sudden news."

"I did not say I was surprised," put in John blankly, wondering what unlucky spirit of *mal à propos* always made him say something to Ellen Daly that sounded like censure.

He chose to feel too much snubbed to come forward un-

invited into the circle of firelight in the kitchen towards which Ellen dragged Lesbia, but stood leaning against the door-post, dripping little pools of water from his macintosh on to the floor, and watching what went on within, while Ellen thrust Lesbia down into the three-cornered chair by the hearth, and proceeded to lift off the heavy cape of her habit, and deal with the wet knots and tangles of her hat-strings and veil. He was so absorbed in looking, that when she darted into a dark corner and reappeared with a heavy wooden pail of peat-sods in her hands, he let her drag it across the kitchen and land it safely in front of the fire before he had presence of mind to come forward with offers of help. When he did make his way to the hearth, he stood looking at the peat-pail with such an expression of horror that Ellen could not help laughing in his face, as she rubbed away the red ridges the iron handle had left on her fingers.

"You carried that great heavy thing all that distance yourself?" he said.

"Yes, I did ; I don't remember that you helped me, Mr. Thornley," she answered gaily.

"You might have asked me ; I was there."

"Yes, you were there, but to tell you the truth I did not want your help. If you mean to go on wearing your wet coat I had rather you stood in the passage and let it drip



there, instead of just in front of the fire, where I shall have to kneel soon to make the toast."

"John, I do believe you are half asleep," said Lesbia ; "you have no idea how stupid you look standing up in your dripping overcoat."

John took off his overcoat, and planted himself in front of the peat-pail, but was not quick enough to secure the peat-tongs with which Ellen proceeded to pile up the fire.

"Show me the place where this has to be carried back," he demanded when she had finished her task.

"It is not going to be put back in its place just yet ; there must be a fire lighted in the room where Lesbia will have to sleep to-night ; and as Kathleen has evidently quite lost her wits at the sight of visitors, and Patsey is in the stables, and Bridget laying the cloth in the dining-room, I think the shortest way will be to do it myself."

"No, I shall do it."

"You !—the notion of an Englishman knowing how to lay a *peat* fire !"

"You must really let me."

"I'll be much obliged to you, Mr. Thornley, if you'll carry the pail across the passage ; but after that you had better come back here and sit by the fire with Lesbia till your rooms are ready."

She took up a lamp and the peat-tongs, and led the way

across the passage into a bedroom, and he followed; but when he had deposited his burden and received her smile of thanks and little nod of dismissal, he could not make up his mind to leave her. She thought him somewhat stupid and tiresome for standing upright by the chimney-piece while the fire-lighting business progressed, his helpless hands hanging down, or making vague dashes to reach her things she did not want, or to drag the peat-pail into corners where it was not required to be.

If he really cared particularly to study the art of piling peat-sods scientifically, she thought he need not have chosen to do it in wet clothes, in a cold room; and that there was no occasion to look so profoundly melancholy over the lesson.

"There," she said, arising from her knees when she had applied the match, and the little tongues of flame were shooting gaily from fibre to fibre of the carefully-arranged cone of sods, "do you think you shall know how to do that another time?"

"I can't imagine how you come to know how to do it," he answered, as his eye fell on the white taper fingers that had been so busy, and then travelled upwards to the fair, soft, delicately-tinted face.

"I will explain the mystery if you like, though it involves a revelation which Pelham and my English cousins

consider very humiliating to Connor and me. We, both of us, passed the first years of our lives in a mountain cabin. Mamma had always very delicate health, the country did not agree with her, and papa insisted on our being sent out to nurse, as used to be the fashion for everybody in our rank of life in this part of the world when papa was young. I was left long enough with my foster-mother to remember the cabin life perfectly ; and I know two or three things, besides how to build up peat-fires, that you will never know if you live to be a hundred, and study all the books in the world. One is, exactly how it feels to run about barefoot on a turfy mountain side on a spring morning early, and how delicious potatoes dipped in egg-noggin taste when you come in afterwards and sit on the cabin step, with the sweet peat-smoke curling round you—a sensible Connaught pig munching the parings at your side, and a brood of downy little goslings stumbling over your feet. You would not think the peasants such savages for living in the way they do, if you happened to know how pleasant all that is.”


“I can’t promise to be an immediate convert to the convenience of pig-haunted cabins, but I give in about the peat-smoke from this night. I promise to find it the most delicious scent in the world, and to like no fire so well as a peat-fire.”

"You must have been very cold when you came in then," exclaimed Ellen, surprised. "You shall have time for the good impression to be confirmed, for now, as you have borne my first humiliating confession so well without any of the triumph over me I expected, I will tell you something else. This is *your* fire I have been lighting. I sent old Bridget to make up one for Lesbia when I looked into the dining-room just now to speak to mamma. This room and fire are for you."

She looked up playfully into his grave face, and was puzzled to meet no responsive smile of thanks, no glance up, even of the eyes that had sought the ground when she began to speak.

She could not guess that he was afraid to look up or speak, because the thought that she should have acted servant to him was more than his reverential chivalrous heart, that knew itself hid under such a cold crust of reserve, could bear.

When the door closed behind her he crossed his arms on the chimney-piece, and leaning his head on them and staring down at the fire, saw it all over again. One by one the rapid changes in the face, which he now acknowledged to be the dearest face in all the world to him, rose up before his eyes and photographed themselves in his memory so as never to be forgotten again. The patient



weariness that was now the prevailing expression when the face was at rest (he had not failed, when she was kneeling by the fire and looking down, to observe the red lines round the eyes that told of recent tears), the flicker of amusement that brought light and life back to the countenance at once, the playful curl of defiance on the smiling lips, the glow of interest when speaking; lights and shades that followed each other as quickly as the shadow and sunshine on the mountain-sides on a windy day, and had the self-same magical glamour of beauty about them. He tried hard to find something to criticize, to satisfy his conscience as to his loyalty to his old ideals. Bride would not have stood there and talked, and shown her thoughts to a comparative stranger, without any special reason for doing so; the little excitement of an unexpected influx of visitors would not have changed her mood from a tearful to a talkative one all at once. Could there be worth or persistence in feelings that followed each other so lightly? Was there not a want of dignity in such easy communicativeness shown indifferently to everyone; for it was no special mark of friendliness to himself, he perfectly understood. He tried to think he did not like it—that a person of such a nature could have no confidence to give that would be of any value; nothing in her to make real intimacy worth striving for—but it would not do, he could not wish any

change in her. She was just herself—she had got into his heart and he must worship her. Why should not the lily open out its leaves and show all its golden heart? The sun and the wind that visited it might be dazzled by its white sheen and the lustre of gold in its depths, but its proud, pure head held itself unsullied and apart, however many gazers came.

What nonsense comparisons are! John caught himself up, ashamed and annoyed at the extravagances into which his thoughts were rising. He had schooled himself all his life against exaggeration, or excessive feeling of any kind. Heavy responsibilities laid on him had sobered him early; he had been used to say that in his life he had never had, and hoped never to have, time for sentiment. Sober duties, that had to be met with well-regulated energies and sober judgment, had succeeded each other too rapidly to leave him any interval for dreaming; and of all kinds of dreams he was most resolute against love dreams. If he ever fell in love, he had meant it to be with such sober certainty of fitness and possibility as would provide against the waste of energy, thought, and life, that he held to be the worst result of disappointment in such a matter.

And now that it had come, in a very different guise to any he had intended, was there still time to turn it away? Did he wish to turn it away? His thoughts flew back

through the events of the last eight months, since the autumn evening when Ellen and Connor had appeared suddenly at Castle Daly, concentrating all their joys and sorrows into a bitter-sweet draught which his spirit seemed to taste. His first amused distant admiration, and Bride's disdain of it. The pitifulness of that night in Dennis's cabin, when the playful girl he had half-admired, half-feared, had seemed to him transformed into an angel of consolation and strength. The long dumb pain of seeing her grief through the dreary weeks that followed, and having to stand quite apart from it, feeling every tear of hers he saw fall like a weight on his heart, and possessing no power to comfort. The meetings since they had left Castle Daly; the senseless keen pangs of mortification at heedless little words and phrases, that perhaps were not meant to carry any pain with them; the equally senseless keen pleasure called up by smiles or thanks, or sentences of acquiescence in something he had said, which reasonably could not be made to bear the weight of signification attributed to them at the time. The underlying satisfaction that through all the winter had been the secret spring of his content, arising from the fact that, unknown to herself, he was protecting her and hers, standing every day between them and a great flood of calamity, that would overwhelm them but for his unmeasured exertions and watchfulness.

Ah, yes ! and that was the consideration which must determine his course. The question no longer was—whether or not this love would end in his own good and well-being. He had made himself necessary to them—to her ; and as long as she had no one else to look after her interests and protect her, he would not desert his post, let the pain be what it would to himself. When his thoughts reached this point, John raised his head from his arms, drew a long breath, and began to move about the room and get ready for dinner. If Ellen had passed a Rubicon, and taken a resolution that rainy afternoon, so had he ; he looked the future in the face, and with his eyes open accepted a love which he had very little hope would ever bring joy into his life. He did not say to himself that there are some sorts of pain better than joy, or some sorts of giving that transcend taking a millionfold, and that life is indeed more than meat ; for he had not come yet to give such clear account to himself of what was working within him ; but he felt the calm and strength that a deliberate putting away of self-seeking always brings with it.

Ellen, meanwhile, had really thrust aside all sad thoughts, in the bustle and actual hard work that under present circumstances an unexpected inroad of visitors to such a house entailed. When Lesbia had been taken to her room, and furnished with a change of dress—the selection of which



from Ellen's wardrobe had given rise to a good deal of chatter and reference to old times between the two girls— Ellen returned to the kitchen, and found Pelham standing by the fire, with an expression of much anxiety, mingled with a certain triumph, on his handsome face. She lifted up her hands with pretended amazement and horror at his doings.

“ I would not have believed it of you, Pelham ! You to have been guilty of the indiscreet Irish hospitality of bringing hungry visitors to a house where there is not a scrap of food for them to eat. Yes, it is true, there is no use in your turning pale now, or grumbling at me, for I can't help it. Our tiresome hens are not laying as well as they did, and I gave away two eggs this morning for a girl that is dying, and I must keep all I have left for mamma, so there is absolutely nothing in the house but some bread and the leg and wing of a chicken that old Bridget has fricasseed for your dinner, and that you must eat on pain of breaking mamma's heart. What could you be thinking of, to expose our famine Castle to such keen eyes as those I have shut up in the panelled bedroom over there ? I should not have expected it of you.”

“ Well, there is a boy now at the door. I made them ride on as we passed through Lenane, and went into the market to see if I could get hold of anything. There was

not a bit of meat to be had ; but I secured a white loaf and some cakes—the last bit of bread there was in the town ; and I bought some decent fish that I spied in a tub by a cabin door, and that a woman told me she had caught out of the creek this morning in her petticoat. It's a poor kind of fish, I'm afraid ; but it will be something to eat. I had it put into a basket, and hired a boy to run after us with it, and he has just arrived."

"How clever of you, Pelham ; you are worth a hundred of Connor and me for foresight. I suppose these purchases will have made a great hole in next week's allowance, and some one will have to pinch for them ; but, never mind, we won't grudge. We'll have two dishes on the table, and piles of buttered toast, and for four or five hours we'll fancy ourselves in the land of plenty again. I'll do my best with the fish to make it pass for a dainty, and I don't suppose either of the Thornleys has much discernment. I should be quite easy if I were sure it was last year's little Babette who was going to sup with us ; I could make her think we were having a pic-nic, and enjoying ourselves immensely ; but you know there is a degree of uncertainty in that quarter now. I left little Babette in my room, dressing in my old pink silk that she used to covet rather last year ; but it may be the great heiress, Miss Maynard, who walks into the dining-room."

"I don't at all know what you mean ; I have never seen anything of the difference you speak of."

"No, I dare say not ; you are too snubby yourself ever to be snubbed ; but what induced you to invite them here, and why did they come ?"

"I met them on the road between Good People's Hollow and Lenane. They had been spending the morning with Anne O'Flaherty, and said that they had intended to call on our mother, but had been detained at the Hollow, discussing relief measures with Anne. It was raining fast, and Eagle's Edge was nearer than the Castle, so I proposed that they should come on with me and stay the night. I hardly expected they would have consented ; but Thornley said that he had business to discuss with me—and I certainly thought that she—that he, I mean—in point of fact, that both of them rather caught at the idea of coming here."

"Ah, I wonder if she can have heard." The words escaped from Ellen's lips involuntarily, and then a look of perplexity crossed her face, and she stopped short.

"What is the matter ? What do you suppose she can have heard ?"

"Nothing—nothing !—don't look at me like that, Pelham ; you know I say silly things often."

He came close to her, and detained her when she would

have escaped, by holding her wrists tightly, looking down into her changing face, with eyes full of dark fire.

“Yes, yes!—but silly or not, I choose to hear this!—What have you got in your mind? You have no business to have suspicions of *her* that you are ashamed to speak out.”

“No, I know I ought not. Dear Pelham, I ‘so hate myself for being such a sieve, that I should like to bite my tongue out. It was only that I had a letter from Connor this afternoon, and I wondered whether by chance she could have heard anything that made her want to talk to me about him.”

“By chance! I wish by chance you would give a straightforward answer. How could Miss Maynard possibly know anything about a letter of yours that only arrived this afternoon? You don’t mean to insinuate, do you, that she and Connor correspond?”

“No—of course not. Please, let me go, Pelham; I know I am very silly—I wish I could hold my tongue.”

“That is not the chief thing to be wished; what I wish is that you would not concoct mysteries. I don’t know what it is between Connor and you that makes you always seem to be living in a web of plots. I suppose you like it; but it is perfectly hateful to me to live among people whose doings I can’t understand; and I beg, that at all events, you won’t draw into your mysteries those who

naturally prefer straightforward ways. At least, don't insinuate stratagems that don't exist, as if you could not believe in such a thing as a truthful person."

The indignant tones and looks were very hard to bear ; the colour flew to Ellen's face, and an eager vindication of her own straightforwardness rose to her lips. Then she remembered Connor's letter, and the secret sympathy she had that afternoon resolved to give to him and his friends. "I have crossed the Rubicon now, and I don't think you are the girl to shrink from any consequences you may have to face on my account." The inevitable concealments,—the having to seem a traitor to household confidence, would be to her the worst of these consequences ; but since she had resolved to run such risk, the best homage she could pay to truth would be not to attempt any self-justification just then. The indignant flush faded out of her face, as Pelham continued to look at her, and tears slowly welled up and drowned the anger in her eyes. She felt very unhappy and helpless, but there was nothing to be said : Pelham relaxed his hold on her wrist.

"You think me very savage," he said, "and I suppose I am. Ellen, I am sorry I have made you cry. I did not think you cared enough for anything I said to be made unhappy by it ; but I have so much distrust and dislike shown to me out of doors, that I can't help feeling it hard

when you and Connor put such a mist of secrecy between us, that I don't know whether you are sympathising with my enemies or my friends."

"Oh, Pelham, how could we sympathise with enemies of yours?"

"The Thornleys are my only friends, and my friendship with them is counted as a crime by the stupid people here, who, because they choose to believe that our father met his death in Thornley's stead, transfer to him all the horror due to the actual murderer."

"No, not all the horror; you would not say so if you knew more about it."

"There now, another mystery."

"Pelham, I can't help it; if people tell me secrets that have life and death in them; I can't betray unhappy wretches that trust me."

"Perhaps not; but you can help giving all your sympathy to the wrong side. You ought to acknowledge that the Thornleys are behaving nobly, and to be indignant at the monstrous ingratitude shown to them. I say nothing about their generosity to us, though I wonder where you can think we should be without it; but just consider what a sacrifice they have made in staying through this miserable winter at Castle Daly, toiling night and day, and spending their money to feed a set of people who have no

claim on them whatever, and who give them nothing but hatred and misconception in return for their charity. Why does not your sense of justice stir itself on their side?"

"Lesbia is liked—the people are grateful to her."

"She can't separate herself from her brother; she is not content to be adored by his haters."

"Oh, Pelham, no more can I separate myself from my brothers. You don't know how hard it is when there is so much sorrow on every side, that one feels as if one's heart were being torn to pieces every minute. I can see your hardships at all events, if I can't care as much as I ought for Mr. Thornley's, and I promise you now to be just to your friends, and to stand up for them to the extent of my little power. Indeed, I did not mean to make you suspect Lesbia of anything underhand. You misunderstood me there. Dear Pelham, let us be happy this one evening—forget that I vexed you, dear, and let us all be happy together this once. I want so to have one happy evening, we have been sad so very long." She threw her arms round his neck as she spoke, and tried to draw his face down to hers. The muscles of his countenance relaxed, but he held his head rigidly upright.

"You can be unhappy and happy as you please then?"

"No, you uncompromising creature; but to-night I could be a little happy if you would let me. I don't know how,

but I think some fresh light has come into the house since morning. It won't last long, there is so much to quench it; but let us bask in it for an hour or two. Some one is thinking kind thoughts of us somewhere to-night, and the warmth of them trembles round us."

"I don't understand such nonsense as that. Shall you?"—(hesitating)—"Shall you?"—(with a great effort)—"Are you going to read that letter of Connor's to Miss Maynard?"

"No, that I am not; I shall not think of doing such a thing. Pelham, you may say what you like about my secrecies, I can't defend myself; but one thing you must believe about me—that my secrets are not of *the* kind you suspect, and that I am not and never will be a clandestine go-between. No, not even for Connor."

Then the stiff neck bent, and the kiss of forgiveness was given, with a warmth and tenderness of brotherly affection that Ellen had never before experienced from him.

Decidedly it should be a very happy evening.

The first thing that Lesbia did when Ellen left her alone to put the finishing touches to her toilet, was to thrust her hand into the pocket of the wet riding-habit that hung against the wall, and draw out a somewhat soiled and crumpled envelope, directed to herself, and still unopened. A lame man-servant, who had come forward to help her to



mount her horse at the gate of Happy-go-Luck Lodge, had thrust it into her hand as he placed the reins between her fingers, accompanying the action with a look of such reverential admiration towards herself, and a gesture of such cunning caution towards John, that Lesbia could not feel as much offended at the liberty so taken as she believed she ought to have been. Bride was always warning her against allowing herself to be looked upon by the poor people round her as a possible source of favour independent of John; but what was the use of being an heiress—of all the money and power being really hers—if the luxury of dispensing patronage was altogether to be denied her, and no one was so much as to know that she was the real queen? Lesbia believed the paper to be a petition, which she resolved at least to examine herself before referring it to the proper authority, till she brought the writing within the glow of the peat-fire and the light of the flickering candles, stuck on the high chimney-piece, that left the ends and corners of the large wainscoted room to dimness and shadows; then, glancing down upon it, she started, and threw herself into the low straw chair Ellen had drawn in front of the fire, with an exclamation between amazement and dismay. Yes, certainly, this sending her a letter privately by a servant's hand, and such a queer-looking, familiar, lame servant too, was a great liberty

for Connor Daly to take. What would Bride and John say? What strong disapproval would breathe from all the grave lines of Bride's face when she heard! how satirical John would be! and how disagreeably their opinion of her easy deceivableness and vanity would creep out! What ought she to do? Give it to Ellen unopened, and beg her to return it to her brother? That would be the truly dignified maidenly course which neither John nor Bride could find a word to say against. And yet—and yet, Lesbia's eyes turned again to the bold curves and flourishes in her name written on the envelope, and all at once the objects surrounding her faded away, and a very different scene came up. The dusty panes of the little conservatory at Whitecliffe and the straggling branches of sweet-briar tapping them, on a windy summer day—herself seated on the stone steps leading from the house, with Mrs. Maynard's week's mending scattered round her, and an envelope with this same handwriting on it in her hand. What a strange whirl of feeling she had been in when she opened and read that letter. It had seemed like a voice calling her from the shores of an old country which she was in the act of leaving for something new. And now, the new did not look altogether so glorious, and the old was beginning to have a glow of tender recollections round it—not regret, that would be too ridiculous, but an enveloping sentimental

haze, as of being hung round with all sorts of pleasant possibilities which actual experience had robbed of a good deal of their charm.

“Mavourneen wears the poorest gown.”

John might say what he liked about fortune-hunters, but that was written about her when it was only too true.

If she dare show that to Bride. Bride would have to acknowledge that it was not *only* being an heiress that made people think her charming.

“My thoughts are born in chains ; they move  
All round and round her in one groove,”

that was the sort of thing real love was, Lesbia supposed. She leaned her dimpled chin on her hand, and looked fixedly at the fire. Brother's and sister's love—of whose satisfactions she had had such beautiful dreams when she had lived a little forlorn waif in her aunt's house—was not like that ; or, at all events, it was her thoughts that were expected to be born in chains, and to move round and round John and Bride in that deep groove of duty and self-culture and intellectual occupation which they prescribed ; and which certainly had a great deal of sameness and dreariness in it. If any other gayer privileges or more dazzling homage belonged of right to her youth and her

heiress-ship—and, yes, her beauty—her two conscientious guardians seemed determined not to let her know it. Could anything be strong enough to break through the brazen tower of proprieties and cautions they had built round their poor little Cinderella princess? Was there any knight at hand bold enough or strong enough to pierce even a small chink and let a breath of fresh air and a little music of flattery in? The handsome knight, with the dark eyes that looked quite unutterable things, seemed to be more anxious than even the guardians to keep every chink of the tower in good repair. It might be gratifying to see him ride round and round, not able to keep away, though too spell-bound to challenge an entrance. But surely the spell ought to be broken some time, some kind of a catastrophe, some new element introduced into the scene, might be desirable. Life was too short now for enchantments to be allowed to last through a hundred years, and it was quite in accordance with all the old stories that letters should come to imprisoned princesses in unorthodox ways. A lame, slip-shod servant, or a talking bird, it did not much matter which was the postman. Leshia had broken the seal and abstracted the letter from the envelope before her thoughts reached this point, and now, while the candles, which had flickered in the draughty ill-built room down to their sockets, were giving out their last rays, she read—


“Oh, say, doth any flower blow  
Meet to adorn my lady’s brow?  
The rose is pale with envy grown  
To watch the tints her cheeks upon,  
And with her beauty to compare  
The virgin lilies shamèd are;  
Nor can she grace or sweetness get  
From hyacinth or violet.  
But though the flower doth not live  
Which to her charms fresh charm can give,  
Her beauty yet such power shall show,  
To scorn the high and raise the low,  
That worn by her this shamrock twine,  
Shall seem an aureole divine.”

Lesbia turned the leaf, and a little garland of shamrocks, crushed, but still green, fluttered out on the hearth. She stooped and picked it up, and with rather trembling fingers—for just then there came a rap at the door, and she heard Ellen’s voice summoning her to tea—she twisted the leaves in among the braids of her hair, which, in spite of Ellen’s patient drying, clung in wet coils round her head.

She had not read the verses calmly enough to gather their meaning fully; but it was something flattering, about her being fairer than all the flowers in the world, and this green crown was a badge of sovereignty, and it was pleasant to wear it. How nice it was to be as beautiful and charming as the writer of these verses found her. And how cross of John and Bride to be always trying to persuade her that she was nothing but a sadly under-educated little girl, whom no one would notice if she were not an heiress.

As she crossed the room, she stopped before a cheval glass in a corner to interrogate it as to what verdict it had to give between the two contradictory opinions. The fitful light of dying candles and ruddy peat-fire, with the dark background of gloom in the far corners of the room, gave the effect of looking down into mysterious depths at the fairy-like figure that seemed to be rising out of a sea of darkness and red fire. Long trailing pink robes hiding all but the points of the tiny feet,—a small flushed face above,—eyes like dark diamonds,—red lips that trembled into loveliest curves of pleasure as the eyes looked,—delicate black brows,—a crown of soft dusky hair with points of green showing in it. Lesbia turned away, quite satisfied to bring that answer into the next room with her.

Eagle's Edge was an irregularly-built one-storied house, with no passage but the central hall; the bedrooms and sitting-rooms all opening into one another. Lesbia had only to turn the handle of her bedroom door to find herself among the party assembled round the supper-table. The room looked cheerful enough just then, in the glow of lamp-light and fire-light, with the table drawn cosily in front of the hearth, and a circle of animated faces assembled round it. Mrs. Daly invited Lesbia to a seat between herself and Pelham. Even she for once looked happy. The evening was always her best time. The contrast



between the anxiety of the day and the satisfaction of having her son safe by her side within sight and touch was so great as to raise her naturally depressed spirits to a degree of cheerfulness she had not often known in more tranquil days; and to-night the sight of the well-filled table, and of Ellen and Pelham partaking freely of such fare as there was, the little excitement, too, of showing hospitality again, all helped to swell the measure of her content and make her positively gay. Gracious looks and words from her seemed to mean more and gave far greater pleasure than other people's graciousness. Lesbia felt a flutter of gratification and pride when she found herself addressed kindly again and again, and when once or twice her replies called up on her hostess' face the rare beautiful smile that Mr. Daly had prized so highly. John observed the unusual attention bestowed on Lesbia, and cast one of his quick criticizing glances that way. What could he be thinking of, Babette wondered. A provoking consciousness tingled into her face under his eyes, and she felt as if the shamrock wreath in her hair was pushing itself into undue prominence, and the note in her pocket burning her, almost as if she feared he could read it through the folds of the pink silk.

It was not like the merry evenings of last summer, when Lesbia had come into the Dalys' house after a picnic

or a sail, to join in the evening meal, and had been thankful to sit in the background under Ellen's wing, listening to the extravagant mirth and wild jokes Mr. Daly and Connor originated. There would never be mirth like that among them again; yet they were far from a silent party; and once or twice Ellen caught herself up in the midst of a hearty laugh, startled by the thought that it was the first time gay talking and laughter had been heard in that house since they came to live there, and wondering what the dingy old walls thought of the sound.

When the meal was over and the table pushed back into the dim, half-lighted region of the wide room, the party drew their chairs in a circle round the hearth, and the conversation gradually took a graver tone. Lesbia went round and seated herself by Ellen, perhaps with an idea of disarming John in case he should be disposed to criticize the amount of low-toned talk she and Pelham had indulged in at intervals during supper-time—perhaps from a secret persuasion that the folds of pink silk and peach-bloom cheeks, and brilliant eyes that had looked at her from the depths of the mirror, would be seen to greatest advantage from the other side of the hearth-rug, with the fire-light playing on them. Not that she was so wholly occupied with these as to fail to notice one or two things that passed on the opposite side of the fire, and



to be touched by them in a region of her heart which the surface-flutter of self-occupation and vanity had not yet invaded. She saw the wistful looks Mrs. Daly turned on her son when John began to talk business with him, and she admired the patient tact with which Pelham replied to all the querulous objections her anxiety prompted her to make to every plan that involved a lengthened ride, or a late return home in the evening; not arguing or giving way, but soothing her by reassuring explanations, and sometimes, when explanations seemed only to aggravate the nervous terror, by a caressing hand laid on her shoulder, and a word or two of remonstrance in a tone that had a touch of authority in it.

“I can’t help it, mother; I have got this business to do: and you would not have me always idling in the house, would you?”

“I ought not to expect it of you; but, oh! Pelham, if you knew what I suffer when you are away, if you would but remember——.”

“I never forget it, mother.”

The words were spoken low, but Lesbia heard them, and noticed that Pelham took his mother’s trembling hand in his as he spoke, and gently stroked the thin fingers, till the nervous twitching in them ceased, and Mrs. Daly was content to lie back in her chair silent while the rest of the

discussion went on ; finding a certain peace in the strength of will that checked the unreasonable exactions she could not herself control. Her son managed her better than her too yielding husband had done, and gave her over-busy heart more rest. John thought, with livelier gratitude than he had ever felt before, of Bride's self-control, that through anxious months had saved him from having to add the harass of constant recollection of fears at home to the harass of distressing business abroad. Lesbia softly put up her hand, and disengaged the shamrock wreath from her hair, and looked with a sigh into the fire as she wondered, vaguely, whether it would be nicer to be loved by a person who could put his admiration for you into verses that people would talk about, or by one who could hardly say in so many words whether you were pretty or not, yet, who did the sort of things that made people trust and look up to him. Before she had come to any conclusion on this delicate question, the silence that had fallen on the group when the business discussion closed was broken by John's turning to Mrs. Daly, and preferring the request which had, he said, brought him and Lesbia to Eagle's Edge that evening. He was obliged, he explained, to go up to London on business connected with his literary occupations, and must remain in town a great part of the summer ; he wished to take Bride with him, as her health

had been rather failing lately, and she dreaded the spring winds; but Lesbia was anxious to remain at Castle Daly a little longer, till he and Bride had taken a house somewhere in London and were settled for the season. If Mrs. Daly would consent to stay for a few weeks at Castle Daly, and take charge of Lesbia till he could return and take her to England, it would be doing them all a great kindness.

John hesitated a good deal over the wording of his request, as if he had not quite realized how great a favour he was asking, till he found himself picking out words for it, with Mrs. Daly's dignified figure before him and Ellen's questioning eyes reading his face as he spoke. He wished they would not keep him waiting so long for an answer. Pelham had looked pleased, even eager, for the first moment, and then came the gradual stiffening of features and figure, which John, from the last eight months' experience, had learned to recognize as the attitude he took when he was considering how most effectually to quench an offer of help or kindness that he looked upon as an attempt at patronage. Lesbia proved a better ally in the difficulty than he had expected: she crossed the hearth-rug, and, seating herself on a footstool at Mrs. Daly's feet, touched the folds of her dress to draw her attention.

"It would be coming back to your own house, you

know, dear Mrs. Daly, with only me in it, and I would try not to be in the way; you were so kind to me last spring that I hoped you all liked me a little."

It was Babette who was speaking now, not Miss Maynard—the timid, coaxing, humble little Babette, of whom John and Bride only had occasional glimpses. Still there was no answer, only a deepening of the frown of pain on Mrs. Daly's brow.

Lesbia went on as if she were talking to herself. "Castle Daly is a great deal nearer Ballyowen than Eagle's Edge; when John goes there to attend the relief committee, or for any other business, he is home again by five o'clock. I ride there and back with him several times a week; and when he is likely to be detained till after dark Bride and I drive into the town and bring him back in the carriage; we like it so much better than waiting at home."

Mrs. Daly's eyes, which had hitherto been staring at some imaginary distance over Lesbia's head, suddenly came to life again, and looked down into the glowing little face upturned to hers: it was only for half a second that the two pairs of eyes met, for Lesbia's curled black lashes swooped down and hid hers instantly; but there was time for some lightning current of electrical fellow-feeling to pass between the two, which made their owners secret allies from that time forth.

Mrs. Daly's manner changed instantly. She sat upright in her chair, turned her face towards John Thornley, and signified her acceptance of his invitation with frank and cordial thanks.

"It would be an effort," she acknowledged, to visit her old home under the altered circumstances, but the pleasure of being of use to such good friends would overweigh any pain. She was glad the plan had been thought of, and agreed to it joyfully. Pelham's objections were all overruled, and he soon let it be seen that his opposition had not arisen from any personal dislike to the visit; only Ellen remained silent, and no one but John noticed the perplexed expression that deepened on her face, as she sat apart looking steadily into the fire while the others discussed details.

"I am afraid you don't like the prospect of going back to Castle Daly," he said, at last.

"No, I don't," rousing herself with a great sigh, and turning her face towards him. "Of course I don't like going back there now; but that is not what I was thinking of. Just now it does not seem much to matter what one likes or dislikes."

"I wish I had consulted you and found out your wishes before I spoke to other people."

"Yes, I wish you had;" then, seeing an expression of

surprise on his face, "you think me very selfish, don't you, for wishing that I could have put a stop to a plan that pleases mamma?"

"I think you see some objections unknown to the rest of the family, and I am hoping that you mean to tell them to me."

"You could not do me any good."

"You can't tell the help I might be till you have tried."

A smile as at some very incongruous idea flitted across Ellen's face, and she said, hastily, "*You*—but indeed you are the very last person." Then, seeing how his countenance fell, she added, "I did not mean it unkindly; I don't doubt your kindness; only that in the particular difficulty I was thinking of just then, you are the last person whose help I could ask."

"I wish you would make the experiment."

Ellen shook her head, and turned again towards the fire.

"Can't you trust me?"

He was grieved when she looked at him again, to see that she had been winking away tears.

"I think I had better hold my tongue, I so often say more than I mean when I do speak. I was accused to-day of making mysteries, and that came of talking. When one can't tell the whole truth, it's better, I find, to say

nothing, even if it leaves one with ever so heavy a weight of responsibility on one's mind."

"I am sorry you have responsibilities you don't share with any one; it ought not to be."

"I can't help it."

"The truth is, you are working too hard. The work that has to be done is trying enough to tough, resolute people, and you identify yourself too much with the sufferers; you let them drag upon you. I am glad you are obliged to go away."

"I am only one person, and it's hundreds who want me here."

"They won't be neglected; there will be just as much given away. Does not that satisfy you?"

"You should not ask me, because I told you I could not explain my real difficulty to you."

"I am afraid it comes from a consciousness that you have been too indulgent. Indeed, I was preparing to bring an instance before you of the way you are imposed upon. Do you know what became of that half-crown which, you, in spite of our rule against giving money, bestowed on Mary Joice a week ago?"

"Yes, just as well as I see you do. She told me herself this morning how she spent it."

"I hope you were properly angry. Come now, won't

you allow that this instance of the harm that comes of breaking rules ought reasonably to reconcile you to giving up the management of such impracticable people as Mary Joice into stricter hands? When a whole neighbourhood is in a state of starvation, is it right to trust one silly woman with a sum of money that would have fed herself and all her neighbours for a week?"

"On Indian meal."

"Yes, on Indian meal. More substantial fare, at all events, than Mary Joice's half-crown's worth of holy water."

"Mary Joice bought something else with her half-crown, Mr. Thornley—something that she showed me this morning in her eyes—she bought hope with it, and I don't grudge her my last penny for that. It will make your Indian meal go a great deal further."

"Such pitiable folly! You would not encourage people to comfort themselves with false hopes, would you?"

"I don't know. I suppose you would not; you are a sensible person, and really wish to know all the disagreeable things that may possibly happen to you in your life. You would not thank anyone, I suppose, for helping you over a very hard time by giving you a gleam of happy possibility that was not sure to come true."

A week or two ago he would have said No decidedly;



but, looking into her face, a doubt seized him ; he was not sure that he might not come to the point of infatuation of wishing those lips not to put an end to groundless hopes.

Mrs. Daly rose to say good-night a few minutes later. While she was exchanging last words with Pelham and Lesbia, John, who by a law of his nature gravitated towards anything readable there might be in any room he was in, spied out Connor's newspaper which Ellen thought she had hidden away among the litter of her work-table, and began to read it, guided in his selection of passages by the emphatic lines that scored the pages. He was just going to burst out in energetic expressions of dislike to what he read, when his attention was caught by some fainter marks that lay thickest in one corner of the paper, and raising it to the light he discovered what they were—large heavy blots of tears that some one had shed while reading. The pain that shot through him like a knife at the thought of whose tears they were, was not altogether the pain of pity ; there was a mixture of indignation in it, against the influence, whosever it was, that recklessly exposed so sensitive a heart to such fruitless emotion. Ellen came back after accompanying her mother to her bedroom to wish him good-night, while he was still looking blankly at the blisters on the paper, not reading any words, seeing nothing but the ragged blotches hardly yet

dry. She was not very well pleased to observe what he had got hold of.

"I suppose it is just impossible to keep a man's hands from a newspaper," she said; "I thought I had put that one out of sight."

"I beg your pardon, then, for disturbing it; it is best out of sight. You pain yourself by reading such worthless productions. I would not let you, if I could prevent it."

"No more than you would let Mary Joice buy holy water."

"This is a much more serious question. Look here," he said, pointing to a sentence in the speech Connor had scored. "It is not water they are talking of buying their vain hopes with, but blood. Have you read that? I don't want to make you needlessly anxious, but you must not encourage anyone you care for to identify himself with such sentiments as these. Do you realize the danger? It is absolute treason they are talking; and wild words in a time like this are too horribly mischievous to be overlooked. If you have any influence still with your brother Connor, keep him from connecting himself with these madmen. He used to send verses to this newspaper, did he not? Pray warn him."

"Unfortunately, to warn Connor against principles or

people because they are dangerous, would be the very way to make him cling more closely to them."

"At least, don't you encourage him in his infatuation by showing him sympathy."

"Give me back my paper, please, Mr. Thornley. We shall not get any nearer agreeing about this if we talk till midnight. You are very much in earnest in wishing to rob Mary Joice and me of the poor little gleams of hope we are trying to live by. You would throw as black a shadow over us as Lac-na-Weel throws on Eagle's Edge, if we listened to you."

"If I could shelter you from false hopes, and the bitter disappointment that must come of them, I should not mind your calling me a shadow now."

Ellen looked up, surprised at the earnestness of his tone; and Lesbia laughed—she was a little afraid of her clever, satirical brother, and that anyone should presume to argue with him was a triumph for her.

"I will risk the bitter disappointment, and go on hoping for Ireland and her heroes as long as I can, I think," said Ellen; "for here is a token of hope lying at my feet." She stooped and picked up the shamrock wreath that Lesbia had let fall.

"See, this must have dropped out of the folds of the newspaper that came from Dublin. I recognize Connors's

handiwork here. It is meant for me to wear, and shows that *I* am to put the Green above the Red, at all events."

"It does not belong to you, it is Miss Maynard's," said Pelham, who had just joined the group; "she wore it in her hair at tea-time."

"Yours, Lesbia!—but where did you find it? It must have dropped from Connor's newspaper. I don't believe anyone but he would have patience to make such wreaths."

"Yes, where did you find it, Lesbia?" repeated John, who had noticed the sudden rush of colour that suffused Lesbia's face when Pelham spoke.

"What does it matter where I found it?—it is only a little, crushed, faded thing." And Lesbia snatched the wreath hastily from Ellen's hand and threw it on the fire.

There was a little blank space of silence, while Lesbia kept her averted eyes steadily fixed on the green wreath, that would not smoulder all at once into blackness on the peat-sod where it fell, but curled up its leaves and showed all the careful plaiting and tying of the tiny stalks beneath. Pelham sent distrustful glances at Ellen, who stood with brows knitted in thought, and John took in the disturbance on all their faces with much surprise. He spoke first.

"I don't mean any disrespect to the shamrock," he said, "but if I were you, young ladies, I think I would avoid either wearing it or burning it just now, when people may

be disposed to put more meaning on your doing so than would be convenient."

"I am sure I don't care what meaning anyone puts on what I do," cried Lesbia, struggling out of her confusion to meet all the looks turned on her, with an air of petulant defiance.

"But if people were tempted to suspect a mystery that you could explain by a single straightforward word," said Pelham, in a low voice, coming up close to her, and trying to catch her eye again as he spoke, "you would explain, would you not?"

She put out her hand to wish him good-night without looking up. "I am sure I don't know what we are all talking about; we meant to say good-night half an hour ago."

## CHAPTER VII.

“Lo, here what gentilnesse these women have  
If we colde know it for our rudenesse ;  
How busie they bee us to keep and save  
Both in hele and also in sicknesse,  
And alwaye right sorry for our distresse :  
In everie manère thus show they ruth  
That in them is all godenesse and all truth.”


—CHAUCER.

THE rain had ceased by eleven o'clock, and John Thornley and Pelham turned out to smoke a cigar in the garden before going to bed. Neither was in the mood for conversation, and Pelham, after venting some grumbling against mystery-mongers, retired to the house, but John lingered full half-an-hour longer. The peat-fire Ellen had lighted was waiting for him in his room ; but in spite of his promise to like peat-smoke for the rest of his life, he found the fresh, soft air more soothing and fitter for bringing his thoughts into order. The heavy clouds had broken up into great silver-edged continents and islands, separated by deep seas of blue, through which the full moon sailed

majestically, and into which, while John looked, Lac-na-Weel lifted his head bare. The rest of the valley and the lower hills lay in patches of cold, misty light and dark shadow. John, with his mind fixed on the events of the evening, saw all without noticing any particular feature of the scene, till his attention was drawn to a small moving light, a yard or two from the garden, that seemed to hover over a cutting in the bog. Was it a Will-o'-the-wisp light? or had he not been half unconsciously watching it for some time receding slowly into the distance till it stopped there? His curiosity became roused at last to the point of throwing away his cigar, vaulting over the low garden wall, and walking towards the appearance. Once across the road he was in uncut bog-land, and his feet sank deeper and deeper in the wet spongy turf at every step. He was just beginning to remonstrate with himself on his folly in pursuing Friar's lantern into a swamp, when a sound of voices reached him; he strode on another yard, gaining firmer footing on the top of a little knoll, and then he could see plainly. There was a cutting in the bog, five or six feet deep, some distance before him, skirted at the sides by little piles of turf; and, partly hidden by these piles, partly showing plainly in the moonlight, he perceived two figures—a woman with a cloak over her head, and a man, deeper in the shadow, who, as far as he could make

out, was crouching or kneeling before her. While he looked, the woman stooped as if to speak to her companion, and in raising her head again the cloak fell down to her shoulders, and a streak of moonlight displayed a mass of golden braids that could belong to nobody but Ellen Daly. At the same moment the wind brought again a murmur of voices: a guttural, moaning sound, and then the clear, sweet tones he would have known among a thousand. One step more forward, and he could have distinguished the words,—but he could not bear the thought of spying upon her. He folded his arms and stood still, determined to wait where he was for the chance of being wanted, but to approach no nearer. He waited some time in the cold long enough to come to the conclusion that if Irishmen had courage and determination to match those of Irish girls, the schemes of Connor's friends need not be desperate after all.

Ellen would have cut shorter the conversation she was engaged in, and suffered more trepidation while carrying it on, if she had known who was watching her. The expedition itself was one to which she had become accustomed, having undertaken it every two or three days for the last six weeks, but to-night it brought her a painful shock of surprise and pain. She had crossed the strip of bog-land quickly, knowing by experience how to avoid the swam-





piest spots; and having reached the stacks of peat-sods, she put her heavy basket and the lantern down on one of them, and called, softly, "Molly;" there was an instant's delay, and then a bent, wasted figure, that looked like a mass of moving rags rather than a man, crept from the dark shadow of the cutting. Ellen recoiled a few steps, with a gesture that even in the dim light expressed shuddering horror and avoidance of what she saw. The man gave a faint moaning cry, as of a creature struck in the extremity of pain, and, throwing himself on his knees, crept after her and clutched the skirt of her dress with both hands; then lifting his right hand towards the light, he cried, with a little sob of excitement and exultation in his weak voice—

"Miss Eileen, Miss Eileen, look, I've done it. I always tauld thim I would; and no one will ever dare to say again that it was my hand fired the shot that killed Squire Daly; for would it not have withered black before it could have touched a thread you wore!"

Ellen hesitated a moment, and then, throwing back the cloak so as to show her face, she stooped towards the crouching figure at her feet and held out her hand.

"There," she said, "it is not enough to touch my clothes; but I don't think you will dare clasp that, if yours has his blood upon it."

"It has not, God hear me!" said the man. "But any way, I'm a sinner, and not fit to touch your hand, Miss Eileen. I'll tell ye the whole of it now as I would to a priest. The lot fell on two of us for the job we had to do that night, but it was a boy from another part of the country that fired the shot that killed him. We were behind the wall that skirts the road at that end of Lac-na-Weel pass, you know of; and when we heard horses' hoofs we got ready. The moon was under a cloud just then—bad luck for ever to it for the same. Dark as it was, I saw, and dropped my gun; but the other boy, who did not know either of the gentlemen by sight, was too quick for me. He got away to his own people, who have no grudge agin him for the mistake, but I can't get away. The neighbours protected me and hid me at first, as they were bound to do, but now they all turn agin me and hate me, for they think that night's work brought the curse, or keeps it on us; and indeed, why would it not be so? It would not be much to starve meself, but it's thim that belongs to me—the mother, and the wife, and the childer—that cry out for help, for bit nor sup, nor a drop of cauld water, will any hand give us but your own."

"Why did you come here to-night instead of Molly? It is much less safe, and I had rather see her."

"It's a turn of the faver that's on her, and my wife is

that wake wid nursing the baby and starving, that she could not have crawled the length of the way in a month, or I would not have come. I'll not come again—we can die, all of us, since you don't belave me, and the sight of me hurts yer eyes."

"I do believe what you have told me, Dennis; but I can't forget that if another person had ridden along the road that night you would have been a murderer; and I am afraid you have not repented of your intended crime—that you hate your enemy in your heart still; that is why I drew my hand back, why I cannot offer to touch you again."

A dark, wild look convulsed the man's face, upturned and white in the moonlight.

"Miss Eileen, I do hate him. I would not have been as I am now if he had let me alone."

"You can't tell that, Dennis. Does not being hated by your neighbours unjustly yourself make you feel how unjust it is to hate Mr. Thornley as you do?"

"Why would it, then?"

A puzzled, helpless expression came into the eyes that were raised towards her face, and with the pity it brought, a sudden recollection flashed into Ellen's mind. He was right: it was not experience of hatred but of love that was needed to extinguish hate.

"Dennis, I have forgotten something," she said. "I

have a message to give you. When my father lay dying, he told me to tell you, if I ever saw you again, that he forgave you his death. He must have recognized you when you lifted him up and carried him into your cabin. But he avoided mentioning your name, and only made me understand."

The man, who had never let go his hold on Ellen's dress, now relaxed his grasp, and sank down to the ground in a heap, hiding his face in the earth and moaning.

"He thought I did it, then; he thought I did it. He died wid that in his mind. I that he'd been generous and good to all his life, and that would have died for him."

"But he forgave you—he sent you a message; and, Dennis, though it tears my heart still to talk of that night, I will tell you something more. He said he was glad you had killed him instead of Mr. Thornley—that the other murder would have been the greater crime; and now, knowing that, don't you think you owe it to him, and to us who have been robbed of him, to put all evil intentions out of your heart against the man whose life he was glad to purchase with his own? It would be killing my father twice over to touch him now. You must promise me, Dennis."

Ellen stooped as she finished speaking, and held out both hands to lift the prostrate man from the ground.

"Miss Eileen, Miss Eileen," he groaned out, resuming his kneeling posture at her feet, "I'll not desave you any more than I would a priest. I had it in my heart to be avenged wid the last grain of strength that was in me. I meant to have gone to-morrow to the valley by the Holy Well and turned *Lac Fecheen*<sup>1</sup> against him in the name of the devil, and then I'd have had him in my power, and it would not have been many days afther that before I'd have waylaid him somewhere, and he would not have escaped me that time. I meant to have done for him before I died ; but now I'll die like a dog, laving him that's wronged me to prosper—to plase you."

"Like a Christian, Dennis, to obey God."

"Eh, I will, or I'll bring your father's double curse down on me from heaven, you think."

"People don't curse up in heaven, Dennis ; but you would cut yourself off from him for ever, and from our Lord, who died forgiving. There, give me your hand, and we will kneel down and say the Lord's prayer together, and I'll take that as your solemn promise that you'll never undertake anything to anyone's hurt again."

They knelt down on the grass side by side, and Ellen slowly repeated a *Pater Noster*, pausing every now and then, and looking steadily at her companion's face, to

<sup>1</sup> The stone of fate.

make sure that his lips formed the words after hers. She did not feel any fear or any sense of the strangeness of the situation ; she was wholly absorbed in the consciousness of being engaged in a momentous struggle, spirit with spirit, which involved the saving of a fellow-creature's life, perhaps by God's help, the rescue of a soul from the dominion of evil. She was too deeply in earnest to have a thought to spare for personal fear. It was only when the effort was over, and, having risen from her knees and dismissed Dennis with the basket of provisions she had brought for his family she stood watching his figure receding across the bog, that she was aware of the extreme exhaustion such a contest leaves. Her limbs were trembling so that she could scarcely support herself, and the distance that stretched between the spot where she stood and the house seemed interminable. It did not lessen her agitation, that, when she had dragged herself beyond the shelter of the turf-stacks, she perceived the dark outline of Mr. Thornley's figure upright and motionless on the knoll between her and the house. She had to stand still to control the beating of her heart, and to keep herself from fainting, and then she perceived that he was moving forward, coming to meet her ; and the anxiety that seized her to increase the distance between him and Dennis as much as possible gave her strength to quicken her steps.

He had determined to meet her in quite a commonplace way, and leave it to her to explain the occasion of her late walk if she pleased.

"I took you and your lantern for a Will-o'-the-wisp, Miss Daly," he began, "and as I have always been ambitious of making the acquaintance of that historical personage, I followed you. Not beyond that knoll, though. When my Jack-o'-lantern resolved itself into a lady with a lantern I stopped."

She longed to ask him if he had recognized any one but herself, but the words she tried to form died away in gasps on her lips. Shocked at the state of agitation he found her in, he drew her hand within his arm without another word, and walked on for some distance, supporting her as much as she would let him, and carefully avoiding so much as a glance at her face.

When they were entering the house he spoke again : "Miss Daly, if I had any authority over you I would not let you do such things as this—no, not if the alternative was half the people in the neighbourhood starving."

"How shocking," she said, in a voice that trembled still. "But you are not thinking of what you are saying. You don't know what I have seen and heard to-night."

"You ought not to be exposed to such sights and sounds. I am more glad than I can say that you are leaving this

place for a time; if it had not been so settled, I should have been obliged to tell your brother about this."

"I would never have forgiven you if you had."

"That would have been very hard to bear, but it would not have been so bad as your hurting yourself. You must not think that you are the only person in the world that can make sacrifices, or that no one is ever to make them for you."

They had entered the house now by the back door. The place was silent, but not quite dark; there was a rush candle burning in a niche by the door, and the glow of the embers made twilight still in the low-raftered kitchen. John Thornley led Ellen in there and drew a chair forward towards the fire, into which she was glad to let herself sink. The shuddering horror and faintness, which she had been struggling against ever since Dennis left her, came upon her again in full force, now that the goal she had fixed her mind on attaining was reached. She could only cover her face with her hands and give way to the trembling that shook every limb. "Don't mind," she managed to whisper softly between the spasms of shuddering, "don't call anyone, don't let mamma be frightened, I shall be better soon. It was just seeing——" And again the dark wild face rose up before her, and overpowered her with horror; the wasted, feverish hand which to her



thoughts would look bloodstained, clutched hers, and again she seemed to be battling with the power of an evil purpose, and imploring heavenly aid to exorcise it. Gradually the paroxysm of nervous terror passed away, and a sense of peace and victory came, restoring her to full self-possession. She uncovered her face and leaned back quietly in her chair to rest before she rose to go to her room.

John Thornley had had the tact to leave her alone to recover, and had employed himself in putting fresh sods on the fire and coaxing them to a blaze.

"Can I get you anything now?" he asked, coming nearer when she looked up.

"I don't want anything, thank you. I am quite well now, and will wish you good night and go back to mamma's room. She likes me to keep about as long as Pelham is up, and to see that all is safe before I go to bed; but she will expect me now it is getting late."

"Your mother is exaggeratedly anxious about Pelham's safety; but how is it she lets you run such risks? I can't understand your being allowed to expose yourself to danger without anybody's interfering to prevent it."

"But there is no danger for me, it is you that don't understand the difference between one person and another here. I run no risk. It was not fear that made me so

silly just now, it was only the pain of something I had to do."

"You must never do such a thing again."

"I don't suppose I shall ever need to do it; but oh! you don't know how thankful I am that I did go out to-night."

She had only been thinking hitherto of the evil deed that had been averted; now, as she looked up into John Thornley's face, a more definite image came. It was this man's life that had been, as it were, given to her that night. She had saved him from a treacherous enemy who had planned his murder. And he stood there looking at her with an expression of devotion in his eyes almost as if he understood that he owed his life to her. 'Something in his face, at that moment, recalled to her mind an expression she had once noticed in Bride Thornley's eyes while she was looking at her brother, and the remembrance of the sister's affection for her brother raised her own thankfulness to vivid joy. It was well, it was well indeed, to have saved the life of a person who was so much loved—it must be worth saving. From this time the brother and sister would have a new interest for her; she should never look at either of them again without a renewal of this moment's joy and thankfulness.

John saw the glow of feeling dawn and brighten in her

face, restoring colour and life to it. Her eyes, full of happy light, met his without a shade of embarrassment or self-consciousness in them as she wished him good night. He did not at all understand what the look, so simple and so fervent, meant, but it thrilled him to the bottom of his heart with happiness. If he never got another such look, he thought, he could live on the recollection of this to the end of his life.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“Yea, thou shalt learn how salt his food who fares  
Beside another’s board ; how steep his path  
Who treadeth up and down another’s stairs.”

PARADISO, XVII.

“How will it look to them, do you suppose, Bride?”

The Thornleys were momentarily expecting their guests, the late owners of the house, for the first time their visitors in it; and during the last half hour John had severely tried Bride’s patience by fidgeting about the library and drawing-room, spying out and quarrelling with all the little added touches of ornament which Lesbia, to the yet greater trial of her patience, had spent the entire morning in devising and carrying into effect.

She looked up a little sharply from her work, when John addressed her.

“My dear John, how can I tell? If your and Lesbia’s principal anxiety about the house is that it should look homelike to the Dalys, you should have thought of that

before the new furniture was brought in. It is quite impossible, I assure you, now, whatever you do or undo, to bring back the old look."

"If my experience is any rule for them, and I think it is," said Anne O'Flaherty, who was seated on the other side of Bride's work-table, in the recess of the newly thrown-out bay window, "the completeness of the change will be a great relief. They are just now dreading a stirring up of old memories, but when they are once shut into the house, the surprise of its transformation will drive other thoughts away, and they will be spared pain. I doubt whether I could have borne to spend so many hours here as I have done this winter, or whether you would have found my head so clear for business, as you are pleased to say it is, if I had not found the sight of your grandeur and luxury very hostile to dreams of old times."

"Luxury you do call it then?" cried John; "and that is just the impression I rebel against creating. To say nothing of the absurdity of sober caterpillars like ourselves turning into gaudy butterflies, there is the bad taste of our doing it in such a time as this. It will look very heartless to some people."

"There is nothing absurd in caterpillars turning into butterflies that I ever heard of," remarked Bride, dryly;

"and as to the house, you agreed with me that Lesbia should have her own way about furnishing it. What has happened to alter your opinion since?"

"One does not set up to be infallible, I suppose," said John, turning away; and Bride's eyes, that had been raised to his with a keen question in them, fell back on her work.

In a minute or two Anne O'Flaherty came round to Bride's side of the work-table, and put an arm across her shoulder, while she leaned over her and discussed the measurements of the poor-garments they were making together; and Bride looked up at her gratefully, willing that she should perceive, and sympathise with, the discomfort which even this slight approach to altercation between herself and John caused her.

This was one of the results of that winter's troubles, the springing up of a warm friendship between these two women, who had neither of them been much thrown in the way of feminine companionship hitherto, and who had sufficient unlikeness in their characters to have begun their acquaintance with considerable mutual repulsion. Hard work for other people, and the daily witnessing of suffering they were equally anxious to alleviate, had been the bond that had drawn them near enough to look through the outworks of unlikeness, and discern the wide meeting-ground of agreement behind.

Anne, the more sympathetic and deep-sighted of the two, had found a yet closer tie between herself and her new friend. She had made a mistake when she said that she had passed much of her time at Castle Daly that winter without being tempted to recur in her thoughts to old times. There had been a good deal of retrospect in her moods, but it had not been the old places that had called it back; it was the subtler interest of living over again through sympathy some of the mental conflicts she had carried on in the same spot years before. The circumstances had been different, but the training through which Bride Thornley was passing was the same—the training of having to sit still and see the person she loved best in the world, to whom her sympathy and companionship had hitherto seemed all-sufficient, drawn away from her towards a more absorbing love, leaving her to stand alone in the old place. There had been a time of such withdrawal of old accustomed affection in Anne's life; she knew the signs of the suffering it caused and its danger. She knew that women to whom Providence appoints a solitary lot have to come, when early ties are broken up, to a turning-point in life, when the prospect of being henceforth first to no one—second, or perhaps nothing at all, to those they have loved best—has to be faced, and that the manner in which this crisis is met determines

generally whether they are to sink or rise for ever in the scale of being—sink to a level of narrower interests, of pettier loves and cares, and hates, than belong to ordinary womanhood, or rise to an outlook of far-reaching sympathies and capacity for unthanked service that endows them with a foretaste of the selfless joys of the angels. Having passed through such a valley of humiliation herself, and come out at the right end, Anne was glad to be at hand to give such little aid as an understanding onlooker knows how to offer silently to a fellow-traveller on her way.

Bride Thornley had no idea that the struggles of her soul were in any way open to her friend; they had never exchanged a word that seemed to bear on the subject, but she had a sense of being comprehended and helped that was comfortable.

The mere touch of Anne's hand soothed her irritability just now, and helped her, when John came back to their side of the room, to resume the conversation without that note of sharpness in her voice that had driven him away.

"I believe we have done nothing but make mistakes all through," he began again. "It is all incongruous. My eyes are open to-day, and I see the hideousness of our doings. I wish we could conjure everything back to look as it did four months ago."

"Oh, John, and don't I wish I could conjure everything



*not to look*, but to be, with ourselves as it was four years ago?"

"I don't say that."

"I do; I quite agree with my namesake, Bridget Elia, in thinking that being well off is a very uninteresting state of things, and in longing for the good old times again when we were poor and enjoyed ourselves. Have you ever read Elia's delicious essay on old china, Anne? Yes?—then I can make you envy us. John and I were as poor once as Elia and Bridget in their good old times. Like them, we two used to lengthen out the lives of old hats, and coats, and bonnets (don't I hold some of them dear in my memory!), that we might buy books and prints with the money that ought to have gone in new ones. That lovely old Morghen print of the Madonna della Seggiola cost John the wearing a napless hat and me the going without gloves a whole year. The evening we hung it up in its shabby frame over our chimney-piece in our dark London lodging we read that essay together over our tea, and we walked about (or at least I did) on mental stilts for days after, hardly knowing whether we were not Charles Lamb and his sister instead of ourselves, or, at all events, feeling as if they were hailing us as congenial spirits from somewhere. Now we have come down to wearing superfine broadcloth and fresh silks, and moving about among furni-

ture that have nothing whatever to do with each other, and scarcely more with ourselves, since the furniture came by waggon-loads from Dublin shops that we don't even know by sight."

"That's just what I am complaining of," struck in John. "It's an upholsterer's house—not ours. We have turned the place into a mere warehouse."

"Not quite that," said Anne, looking down the long room lined with bookshelves to the vista of conservatory beyond; "but I am of opinion myself that it takes at least a hundred years and the influence of a generation or two to make a big place into a family house. One or two people can turn a small house or a few rooms into a congruous shell for themselves in a few years; but if you want to fill a large space you must take time to grow into it."

"After all," said Bride, with a sigh, "it does not greatly concern us. We are only here for a time, taking care of Lesbia's house till the right guardian comes. In a few years we shall hang up our Madonna again over some chimney-piece somewhere, and set about secreting a suitable shell for ourselves. John will never be allowed to wear shabby coats and hats again; he is too well-known a person now, and his work is too well paid. But if he marries, and I find myself a supernumerary in the estab-

lishment, I shall let myself gradually sink or rise into congenial shabbiness again. No one will mind."

She looked at her brother as she finished, anxious to read by the expression of his face what he thought of the picture she had drawn. She was quite sure, by the far-away look in his eyes, that a vision of the new home was before him; but if there was any expression on his face it was one of annoyance.

"Of course it will come to something of the kind in a year or two," he said. "But you need not trouble yourself with so many suppositions, Bride. When you and I settle to our life work in some London home, there is no likelihood whatever of your not being first in it." He had asked himself and answered, that not for any consideration in the world, if he had the power, which he never should have, would he bring Ellen Daly to pine in such a cage.

"Where is Lesbia?" he asked. "I hope she means to be in the way when our guests arrive."

"No fear but she will, she feels the dear importance of acting hostess far too deeply to miss any of its duties. I wish it had not happened to occur to her that the best way of doing honour to her guests is to receive them with great state. I can say nothing to dissuade her from her elaborate preparations, for Mrs. and Miss Daly are much more

her friends than mine, and she professes to know their taste."

"She may be right about Mrs. Daly," said Anne. "She is used to a good deal of formality."

"But," hesitated John, "there are other members of the family very unlike her, to whom the old ways of the house seemed to belong."

"If you are thinking of Ellen, I believe you may trust to her seeing nothing for the first hour beyond my face. It was certainly a very good thought, your starting off this morning to fetch me. I wonder how you came to have it."

"Ah! there," cried John, "there are the carriage-wheels, and the commotion that announces an arrival at Castle Daly is beginning. Now, Bride."

"No, no, John, you forget; you and I are to keep in the background; it is Miss Maynard's house, and there she is, coming down stairs to receive her visitors. Let her enjoy herself. She has been three-quarters of an hour dressing for the situation. But how is this? I left her arraying herself in her newest Paris costume, and she appears in one of the old despised Whitecliffe dresses. What is the child thinking of?"

"If Connor Daly were coming, a caprice like that would make me anxious," whispered John to Bride, as they stood in the library doorway and watched Lesbia's progress down

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the hall ; " but as it is only Pelham, who takes no more notice of Babette than if she were a doll, we must put it down to sheer love of change."

" Why not to more refinement of feeling than we gave her credit for ?" returned Bride. " She is quite pale with excitement, poor child. The Dalys were kind to her in her Cinderella state, remember. I am glad she felt at the last moment that she could only welcome them in her old Whitecliffe attire."

After all the anxiety of the three hosts to do the honours of their house gracefully, the most prominent part in the welcoming fell to Anne O'Flaherty's share. Mrs. Daly put up her heavy crape veil when she saw Anne waiting in the hall, and hurried towards her, her poor pale face so working with emotion that when they met she could only throw herself into Anne's arms and sob on her shoulder. It was just there that Anne had stood to receive her when she had entered the house a bride with her husband twenty-five years before. She had been jealous of her influence then, anxious to put an end to her intimacy in the house, for fear it should interfere with her own rights but now, how wretched the old barriers and heartburnings looked when they two stood the only companions left who could enrich each other with recollections of what *he* had said and done in the old days. All misconceptions fell

before that thought, and they felt that, whatever had gone before, it is people of the same generations who in great sorrows and losses can best comfort each other.

Ellen stood by, full of joy at the unexpected warmth of her mother's manner to Anne, and content to wait her turn till Mrs. Daly had turned to Lesbia with apologies for her emotion. Then she seized Anne's hands.

"How much better than I had hoped—how good of you to come here."

"I did not come—I was brought," Anne said; and on this hint Ellen all at once remembered her real hostess, and turned to Bride blushing and eager to make up for her own and her mother's remissness.

"We are so grateful to you for having such a kind thought."

"Not to me—for I hadn't it," said Bride, bluntly; it went against the grain to give the explanation, but honesty obliged. "It was my brother, who went to Good People's Hollow this morning without saying a word to anybody, and brought her away almost by force."

Ellen did not feel disposed to offer a third time the thanks that had been twice rejected, but she looked up at John as she passed him to go up stairs with the light of pleasant surprise still glowing on her face.

"It was very clever of you. Do you know," she said

confidentially, "I begin to think that in emergencies you are the person who knows the right thing to do?"

*Begin to think!* The sentence sounded audacious to, Bride, but it was quite enough to make John feel foolishly happy all the rest of the evening.

Mrs. Daly did not come down stairs again, and escaped the pang of seeing little Lesbia occupy her old place at the head of the dinner-table; and Ellen was so engrossed in hearing news of the Hollow from Anne, that she hardly noticed where any one sat. It was quite otherwise with Pelham. The prospect of returning to Castle Daly as a visitor had not troubled him beforehand. He had been to the house several times since his father's death, and the changes in it were quite familiar to him. Yet it was he who was the real sufferer on that first evening of the old possessors sitting as guests in the family rooms. He was the person to whom the trial brought all, and more than all, the bitterness that might have been anticipated from it. It was he who, in every morsel of food that passed his lips, ate the bitter bread of exile and humiliation. He had not cared for the old home as the others had cared for it; there had been times when he had despised it, and after his long absences in England hated to come back to it; yet, even then, there had lurked at the bottom of his heart a certain pride and joy in the feeling that it was his; that

it belonged to him as unalterably as the sun to the sky. Visions of his early days came back to him that evening, with the hazy glory hanging round them that belongs to half-remembered childish scenes—of the days when he used regularly to be mounted on his father's shoulder, after breakfast, to make his morning rounds with him to the stables and dog-kennels, and when a babyish whim of his always found a dozen dependants eager to carry it out: of the times when he rode through the villages on the estate on his pony by his father's side, and the people pressed out of the cabins to look at him and call down blessings on his head. He had felt like a prince then; it had been nothing to him then that his subjects were in rags, and the grandeur and state had all been slipshod. It was the worst part of his pain now that the discovery and the consequent contempt had come later, for it made him feel as if his present sense of loss and longing was a punishment—a weird sort of revenge which one part of himself was taking on the other. If he had always been loyal to his own home, he fancied he could have let it go with more inward dignity. At least, he should not have felt the present appearance of the house, realizing as it did his discontented dreams in past times of what it ought to be, such a bitter mockery as he felt it now—a Tantalus vision put so close to him, that it seemed as if the least movement of his



hand would grasp it, and yet utterly beyond his reach. For a few moments in the course of the evening Pelham tried to turn the pain out of his mind by giving himself up to a day dream. He was not much addicted to day-dreaming, but just now the vision seemed made to his hand, and instead of inventing anything, he had only to forget. He was seated a little apart from the rest of the party, in a window-recess of the well-lighted, tastefully-furnished drawing-room. Bride Thornley was playing soft music on the grand-piano at the far end of the room. Anne O'Flaherty and Ellen occupied a sofa by the fire ; and Lesbia Maynard, in her old pink muslin dress, of Whitecliffe memories, sat meekly on a stool at their feet. It might have been last year, or rather one of his visions of last year, realized by an enchanter's wand. This was home ; his father's house, to which he was heir ; not as it ever had been, but as he used to see it sometimes in his thoughts, while he dreamed of the day when he would ask a certain little penniless girl to share it with him. It was his taste and care that, for her sake, had brought together all the comforts and elegances he saw round him. She was on a visit to his father and mother, and to-morrow he was going to speak to her and tell her of his love. She would lift up her dark eyes surprised and grateful ; a low hesitating voice would answer sweetly. She would think

only of him ; but he should look round proudly, glad to have so much to offer—such a worthy casket to enshrine his pearl. That was such a natural reading of the picture his eyes rested on ; to make it real, so little undoing, so little forgetting was needed, that, in spite of all the pain the reaction would be sure to bring, Pelham let his thoughts stand still before it, to contemplate it a little while.

“ Mr. Daly ”—the voice of which he had been dreaming, just as soft and meek as he had been fancying it, woke him from his reverie. Lesbia had left her foot-stool, and tripped across the room to the window-recess—“ Mr. Daly, I want you to come into the conservatory to look at some new plants I have just had sent from Dublin, and advise me about placing them.”

The dream fell shattered into a thousand pieces, and Pelham got up to follow with an inward groan, feeling as if every nerve of his body had been bruised and wounded in the concussion of the fall.

Lesbia paused once or twice in her progress across the drawing-room to draw his attention to objects they were passing. “ That picture over the sofa was my present to John and Bride at Christmas. It is a Landseer. They fell in love with it when it was exhibited in London years ago, and when I read in the *Art Journal* that it was again

to be sold I secured it for them. Was not I lucky? That mosaic table, with the doves, and the marble statuette of Psyche, belonged to my great uncle, and came to me from Florence after his death. You must come a little this way to see the Psyche to advantage. Some people think it very beautiful—John does.”

Young Mr. O’Roone, when Lesbia had introduced him to the Psyche a few days before, had found something flattering to insinuate about the disadvantage that marble Psyches were under when animated ones stood near. Lesbia could not help wondering whether any thought of the kind would by chance occur to Pelham Daly, and she stole a glance from under her eyelashes to see if there were any trace of it in his face. He was not looking at the Psyche with any favour, but neither was he looking at her. Lesbia was not quick enough to read the sensitive pained pride his carefully-composed features expressed, but she felt chilled and mortified, just as she had often felt at Whitecliffe in the early days of her acquaintance with the Dalys, when Connor and Ellen made much of her in their impulsive wild way, and the standing aloof of the dignified elder brother gave her the impression that she was to blame somehow, and had committed herself to something silly. She felt just as she had often felt then, that she could not bear to come to the end of the

evening without having gained some little token of homage from the quarter whence it was hardest to win, to restore her self-complacency. They had to pass through a vestibule, connecting the drawing-room with the conservatory, that had lately been decorated and furnished with orange-trees in tubs.

"Look there," said Lesbia, standing still before one of these, and pointing upward to a moth-eaten stuffed elk's head surrounded with a decoration of rusty spears and old double swords that occupied one side of the wall. "Those curious old things were left behind in the hall when the old furniture was taken away, as not worth moving. I had them taken down carefully, and put up here after this wall was painted, because I thought your mother, all of you perhaps, valued them—and it is nice to keep something that was here before. How do you think the old elk's horns and the armour look among my orange trees?"

"Very much out of place and very shabby, I think they look," said Pelham. "You had much better turn them out after their original owners; if the poor things could speak they would remonstrate on the cruelty of being put up in their old places to act as foils to new importations. I pity them myself."

"I thought you would like it," Lesbia said, timidly. "We are only tenants here, you know, and your people

have lived in this castle for hundreds of years. When you come back here to live——”

“I never shall. I know now that it is impossible. The misfortunes of this year are too overwhelming to leave us any hope of making head against them. We must go down. Let every scrap and shred of a memory of us be put away; it is the best thing that can happen. I stay in this neighbourhood at present for my mother’s sake and for Ellen’s, but I hate it. If I could, I would go away to the furthest part of the earth and struggle to forget all here as hard—as hard as a swimmer struggles who is fighting for his life.”

The words were spoken low, but Lesbia looked up frightened at the vehemence with which they came out, and at the sort of angry light in the eyes that were fixed on the mouldy relics far above her head.

“Would you really wish to forget everything quite?” she said. There was the appealing, injured baby-look in her eyes that used to come in Whitecliffe days, when Wattie tore her dress or Bobby pinched her, the sight of which had made Pelham tingle with indignation and desire to interfere in her behalf often and often. He caught the look as he was turning to walk away, but it did not stop him—it was only another sting added to the multifarious pains of the evening. He had wakened from

his dream with a start of fear at something most repugnant to his pride, which such dreaming might bring him near, and the only thing to be done was to shake himself roughly free from every trammel of illusion. The bell rang for evening prayers just then, and Bride, as she came forward towards the upper end of the room from the piano, happened to observe Lesbia's entrance from the conservatory, and was surprised and a good deal amused at the dignified height to which she had drawn her small head, and the air of general proprietorship of the whole house with which she seated herself by John's side at the reading-table while the servants filed in. Lesbia was unusually talkative when, after prayers, she and her guests stood in a group together discussing plans for the next day, and surprised Bride again by the sharp tone in which she contradicted some assertion of Pelham Daly's, and her pertness to John when he came to the snubbed young man's rescue, and tried to prove to her that she was in the wrong. Bride thought she had cured Lesbia of Missish airs caught from Aunt Joseph; and was dismayed at a relapse on this first occasion of her being thrown with old acquaintances again.

But her chief surprise came later in the evening, when on going, as was her custom, to take a last look at her sister asleep in bed in the room next her own, she dis-

covered that the round rosy cheek she stooped to kiss was wet with tears, so were the soft dark curls that strayed on the pillow. Greatly disturbed, Bride put down the candle and knelt by the bed. The child crying herself to sleep in her own beautiful prosperous home—what could it mean? She lingered a moment, hoping that the heavy wet lashes would be lifted up, and that her sister finding her near would confide to her the trouble, whatever it was, that weighed on her mind. She had reason to suspect that the sleep was only pretended; but the appearance of unconsciousness was persevered in, the eyelids remained tightly closed, and she had to get up and go away unsatisfied. At all events, little Lesbia's troubles could not lie very deep, Bride said to herself; and she hoped it might be other people's sorrows, not her own, that had called forth the tears. She herself had knelt long that night thinking of their guests, and praying that the widow and orphan son and daughter who had come back to a home desolate for them might be comforted. She had had to struggle hard with her heart as she prayed, lest a grudging reservation should creep in respecting a compensation which she believed to be awaiting Ellen, and which in her thoughts so far surpassed her loss that it was difficult not to envy instead of pitying her. She had tried to pray: "Let all the treasure of the thoughts and

tender love of the heart in which I have reposed so long be made over to her, to comfort and enrich her life for ever ; and let me learn how to be poor in earthly love ;” and she had succeeded at last in winning the glow of disinterested love, and the peace that comes to those who arrive at hating their lives and finding them again. The sight of little Lesbia’s tears seemed a rebuke to her for her struggles. They no doubt had welled forth freely ; without any self-regarding reflections or far-seeing grudges ; from pure pity and tenderness, showing how near the child’s heart is to God. Before she fell asleep Bride took herself severely to task for having ever looked down on little Lesbia. It did not occur to her to suspect that any other struggle with chilled affection, except of the kind she knew, could be going on near her. Her experience of sorrow had all been in one direction, and she was not fanciful. If it had been Connor with his winning ways, and openly-shown preference for Lesbia, who had come to the house that day, she might have been suspicious ; but to suppose that her little sister could cherish a secret regard for one who seemed to avoid rather than seek her would have been an outrage to her sensitive proud maidenliness.



## CHAPTER IX.

“Oh woman of three cows, agragh, don't let your tongue thus rattle ;  
Oh don't be saucy, don't be proud because you may have cattle.  
See where Momonia's heroes lie, proud Owen Moore's descendants ;  
'Tis *they* that owned the glorious name, and had the grand attendants.  
If *they* were forced to bow to fate, as every mortal bows,  
Can *you* be proud, can *you* be stiff, my woman of three cows !”

*Translated from the Irish Mangan.*

AFTER her last night's reflections, Bride was quite ready to acquiesce good-humouredly, when her brother suggested at breakfast that the journey to London, on which they were to have started the following day, should be postponed till the end of the week, to give their guests time to settle in comfortably, before they were left to Lesbia's care. She was longing for change, for her health and spirits had suffered much from the winter's hard work ; but she saw that her consent to remain was received as a great boon by him, and that reconciled her to waiting. She reflected that it might not be long that the granting or refusing favours, on which John's heart was set, would remain in her hands. Her anxiety to gratify him extended

so far as to make her take every opportunity that occurred of being with Ellen, and she tested her own generosity by speaking a good deal of John, and taking care that when the cabins were visited and the arrangements for distributing food among the starving people were discussed, all the good results due to his foresight and capacity for administration should be pointed out. She could not speak of John without praising him, but hitherto it had not been her practice to speak often of him; the partnership between them had been too close; she would have felt it like praising herself. Now her sense of proprietorship in him was passing away, she had fairly seen that the joy of his good deeds and the pride of his talents might come to be another's treasure, even more than her own. It was, perhaps, a help that Ellen did not seem in any hurry to take possession. She was first critical, then surprised. It was not till she and Bride were returning from the village, where they had spent the greater part of the morning in going from cabin to cabin, that she grudgingly made her first admission.

"You are good managers; there is not nearly so much misery here as in the hovels round Eagle's Edge, and yet you have only used the same means to meet the distress that you have supplied to me. You must have put more thought and care into it, somehow."

"And authority," put in Bride.

"Yes," hesitated Ellen.

"Don't be afraid of saying exactly what you feel," said Bride, noticing a shade of disapproval in Ellen's face.

"Well, don't be vexed at my saying it, but, necessary or unnecessary, I would not have said what you did to Biddy Flanagan for throwing those few grains of Indian meal to her chickens."

"Few grains! It was a handful. What did I say?"

"You said it was sheer dishonesty; that she was stealing bread from the mouths of her neighbours' starving children."

"So she was; all waste of food is robbery of the starving just now."

"But it hurt Biddy dreadfully. She has the kindest heart in the world, and would do anything for her neighbours if she thought of it, and she has always been famous for honesty. She was crying under her shawl all the time you were looking about."

"I was looking about to ascertain if the precautions against the fever we insist upon had been properly carried out. If she has such a kind heart as you say, and cares for her neighbours, she will show it better by attending to the rules for preserving the health of the place than by crying at a word. I am afraid her tears won't prevent her

wasting part of the next measure of Indian meal served out to her, and coming back clamouring for more before the proper time."

"No, because, you see, she does not believe what you said; she only thinks you very unjust. She knows she is neither cruel nor dishonest, and she looks upon Indian meal as a sort of horrible stuff sent here in unlimited quantity by government to punish them somehow for their potatoes having failed. She will throw away the next basinful she can lay her hands on with energy, as a protest against the injustice of your opinion of her."

"She is very ungrateful, then, to think more of my opinion of herself than of all the efforts she sees us making for her solid benefit. She ought to put aside any harshness there may seem to be in my words (which after all only call things by the right names), and trust us from seeing what we do. That is what I should call reasonable."

"Ah, but we are not made like that," cried Ellen, "we Irish people. English or Scotch people may be reasonable enough to thrive on solid food, given with heart-wounds and stabs to their pride along with it, but we can't."

"Do you mean that you can't take either medicine or food unless it is sweetened by flattery?"

"We cannot thrive on it if it is soured with disregard and contempt. But please excuse me ; I did not mean to apply that to anything you have done. I have been looking on all the morning amazed at your kindness, and the people ought to be grateful. My thoughts flew off to larger questions as you spoke, and I was wondering how it is that this foreign charity food is so bitter to those that eat it. Why we long so that we could have been fed with the abundance of corn our own land brings forth, and that seems, by some machinery we can't understand, to be spirited away from us."

"Ah, your younger brother writes in the *Nation* newspaper, and goes in for its politics, does he not ?"

"Yes, and you are not the person to quarrel with a sister for being of the same opinion as her brother," said Ellen, smiling.

Bride could not quarrel with the smile, it was so sweet, though there was a gleam of mischief in it. "I won't quarrel with you," she answered ; "but, putting politics aside, I should like to persuade you to modify your last statement. Surely, it is very unsafe to make pride and sentiment the gauge of acceptable benefits. They are dangerous guides, and might lead us to throw away the truest affection and most earnest kindness, labouring for one's highest good, if prejudice came in the way."

"I know the sort of kindness labouring for one's highest good you mean," cried Ellen. "I have experienced a good deal of it in my life. Its chief function is to make one feel oneself a worm, thankful to creep into any hard shell to get out of its way. It may be a very good sort of affection, but it just kills me."

She was thinking of Pelham Court, but Bride of course did not know that, and there was a pained gravity in the tone in which she answered "I am sorry to hear you say that," which puzzled Ellen.

They had reached the garden gate by this time, and Ellen stood still to look at the house. The outside, though it had undergone some repairs, was little changed and just at the moment there was a bustle going on in the court-yard, and a sound of rising voices that brought back old happier times to Ellen's memory. Lesbia's handsome new phaeton had been brought out of the coach-house to be washed, and a concourse of ragged boys and men from the roadside, where they had been working, had collected to watch the operation and assist with suggestions and the occasional more active contribution of a shower of water energetically thrown over wheels or cushions, as it happened, from whatever vessel they had chanced to snatch up. The men were sadly weak and starved-looking, and many of them were sitting down wearily on the upturned

wheelbarrows they had brought with them into the yard, but every now and then a shout of quavering laughter rose up.

"Did you ever see anything so childish?" cried Bride, in despair. "The least thing tempts them away from their work. Every day since the new carriage came we have had the same scene. If John were here, he would have to be very angry."

"But he is not here, and you must not be angry; it is such dull, useless work the poor boys come from—spoiling the green hill-sides with roads that we none of us want, and that we shall always hate to see—and it's nothing but Indian meal they'll get for doing it. You must not grudge them the little bit of respite that comes in their way; it does me good, if no one else, for it takes me back to the times when we could not have anything new without all our neighbours round sharing the benefit by getting some amusement out of it in some way."

"Your mother found the irregularity and the interruptions very trying, she tells me; and I confess so should I. I like everybody to mind their own business."

"By degrees, I suppose, we'll learn. I say *we*, because I always identify myself with the Castle Daly village people. I can't help it. We'll learn to attend everyone to his own concerns only, and to take advice and what-

ever else we can get from our betters without troubling ourselves to give back any interest in their doings in return."

"And then you'll begin to prosper."

"And to be dull and discontented and selfish."

Bride laughed as she shook her head. "I can't allow that those are necessary results of hard, independent work," she said. "You have a very one-sided way of putting things; but I have a glimmer of what you mean. John was saying something like it a few evenings ago. The sort of interdependence and mutual affection and interest between rich and poor you look back upon is a remnant of the old clan feeling, and has, no doubt, a great deal of beauty and poetry about it. I can understand the revolt you feel against its being merged into the hard individualism of the stage of society that has to follow. It looks ugly in the first stern form of struggle it has to take, but it must come and work out into its own good. You shall talk to John about it."

"I sha'n't understand him if he translates my 'good times' and 'bad times' at Castle Daly into 'stages of society' and 'laws.' I won't be made to look at things on a large scale, for then he and you are sure to get the better of me. I shall insist on going back to where we started from—the tired men sitting on their wheelbarrows and enjoying the washing of Lesbia's carriage—and say, as



I have always said, that I could never bear to think of Castle Daly without Daly's Corner hanging on behind it, and finding its chief solace, and all the amusement and glorification of the life lived there, in the connection. I don't see that one has the least right to exist without the other. I suppose it is the clan feeling I have got, but I do in earnest think there ought not to be great places or very beautiful things unless a whole company of people are to share at least in the glorification of them. So much ought not to be shut up and hedged round for the delight of two or three. If everybody lives to himself, and only represents himself, then everybody might be comfortable, but there need be no grandeur."

"We are getting into mazes of political economy, I am afraid, and had better wait for John to lead us through. There is your mother coming to meet us with Lesbia."

"I wonder what they are talking about that so interests mamma. She looks quite animated. Lesbia knows how to amuse mamma better than I do; I wish she would teach me her art," said Ellen, with a tone of self-reproach in her voice that made Bride look at her with more complacency than she had felt before. She was not quite invincible then; everybody did not put her first.

Lesbia had persuaded Mrs. Daly to take a turn in the flower-garden, to see how the bulbs were coming up, and

how the shrubberies were improved by the weeding and planting out that had gone on through the winter. She perceived quickly enough that Mrs. Daly was not affected by the sight of the improvements as Pelham had been. She liked to have them pointed out to her, and the implication running through Lesbia's talk that she had not worked for herself, but towards the time when the owners would return to the Castle again, met with no contradiction from Mrs. Daly. Neither she nor Lesbia troubled themselves about the exact bearing of what they were saying to each other. It was only in this strain that Lesbia could speak while pointing out her improvements to the old mistress of the place; and it was so pleasant to fall into it, that she would not vex herself with even a remote glance at the conditions which only could make her words come true. If it was a day-dream they were making for themselves, the old lady of the Castle and the young one found equal satisfaction in upholding each other in it, so that no consciousness or questioning was allowed to creep in and imperil its foundations.

When they had finished the round of the garden and pleasure-grounds, and were slowly pacing the sunny terrace with its view across the head of the lake towards the Maam Turk mountains, Mrs. Daly, to her own surpris

found herself opening out to Lesbia on recollections of the first years of her life at Castle Daly, and of Pelham's childhood. It was the sight of Lac-na-Weel's dark head, for once free from clouds, which Lesbia happened to remark upon, that made her begin, and the interest in the girl's brown eyes tempted her on to a fuller account than she had ever given any one else of what she had suffered long ago, when her eldest son at six years old had strayed away from home and been absent for fourteen hours. Ellen was a baby then, living with her foster-nurse in a cabin at the foot of Lac-na-Weel. Pelham had been carried to see her once or twice, and, taking advantage of his nurse's carelessness, he had slipped from the house early one morning, and set forth to find his way across the mountains alone—a sturdy, fearless little fellow, used to climbing, and hard to turn back from anything he had set his heart upon. He had been missed some time before anyone had the courage to tell her; and then what an agony it had been to bear the slow passing of the hours, and the return of one party of searchers after another with no news. No one had chanced to guess the direction the child had taken, and of course everyone's thoughts turned to the lake at once, and she could not help seeing how little hope most of them had, and that the search was half pretence with the greater number who went. She was

ill at the time, and not allowed to leave the house herself; and she told Lesbia that she believed her dislike to Castle Daly arose from the painful associations that the views from all the windows had with that day's watchings. She could never afterwards see the shadows of the clouds flitting over the hills, or watch the waters of the lake deepening into the glow of sunset, without recalling the horror in which that day had gone down. At last, long after dark, a tall, strange, wild-looking man had brought the child home, with the story of how he had found him gathering bog-berries on the edge of the precipice that gained the mountain its ominous name, because no shepherd ventured to pasture his flocks on that side of the hill for fear they should fall over and be dashed to pieces. Mrs. Daly paused with a shudder at the long-past danger.

"And then it was all over, and how happy you must have been," said Lesbia.

"But, my dear, it was not all over, and that is why my thoughts go back to that day so often, tracing onwards from it so many of the troubles of my life. The man came up those steps (I was standing at the top) with my boy on his shoulder clutching his elf-locks with his little hands, and whether it was that the poor child was afraid of being scolded for running away, or whether the man had fascinated him somehow, I don't know, but for a

minute he clung to him and would not get down even to come to me. I shall never forget what I felt—the devouring anxiety to have him safe once more in my own arms out of the keeping of that dreadful wild man. For he was a dreadful man. I shall never forget his face as he stood under the light in the hall with Pelham clinging to him. I knew him by report; he had a bad character, and was living in the mountains almost as an outlaw. Of course we rewarded him amply; but that did not satisfy him. He seemed to feel as if he had a sort of right over the child because he had saved his life, and he would hang about the Castle even after I had warned him to keep away. He used to meet Pelham out on his walks when he got a little older, and tempt him to make excursions into the mountains with him, and offer him presents; once it was a young eaglet that he had taken out of its nest on the top of Lac-na-Weel. I could not overcome the horror the association gave me, and I had no peace till I had persuaded Mr. Daly to send Pelham to England and let him go to school with his Pelham Court cousins and spend his holidays with them. That is how it came about that Pelham had a different bringing up from Connor and Ellen, and that he has lived so little in Ireland. I thought I was doing the best for him, but I often fear now that I made a mistake. If I had con-

trolled my dread of Dennis then, there might have been fewer difficulties in Pelham's way now."

"But is that man here still?"

"I dare not ask. I know there are suspicions about him that I must not allow my thoughts to dwell on. It is bad enough to be always saying to myself that if I had only let Pelham be brought up as Connor and Ellen were, he would now be as much beloved here as they are, and I need never have feared for him."

"But he might not have been what he is if he had been brought up differently," Lesbia ventured. "He might not have been so much to you."

"Ah, there it is. I brought him up for myself, not for his own happiness in the place where he has to live. He has never had a real home. Ellen and Connor cling together, and he is left out. I feel the hardship to my very heart. I long to see it made up to him, to get him among people who will find him out and appreciate him."

"There are such people," said Lesbia, very low: "my brother and sister."

"Yes," said Mrs. Daly, "that is why I feel so much at home among you, and happier than I have felt for months. You must forgive me, my dear, for troubling you with such a long-past story. Here is Ellen coming from the

village: she will be jealous when she hears how long I have stayed out with you."

"Yes, indeed, I am jealous," cried Ellen, who had now come near enough to hear the last sentence. "Lesbia, you must be a witch. I always suspected it, and now I know. There must have been a four-leaved shamrock in the wreath that came to you by post the other evening."

"Mrs. Daly has promised to come out with me after luncheon," said Lesbia, triumphantly. "She and I are going to drive together to Ballyowen to fetch the gentlemen home when their weary relief committee business is over. I sent a servant to bring back their horses, so they have no choice but to come with us."

Ellen might easily have been jealous of the lovely smile of thanks Lesbia got from Mrs. Daly in return for this speech, if she had been able to feel anything but delight at seeing her mother look so nearly happy again.

"How considerate and womanly the child is growing," Bride thought; "and surely she gets prettier every day. John could not call her eyes brown beads if he saw them just now. Her manner to Mrs. Daly is just what it ought to be, so prettily reverential and affectionate, and yet too simple to call up any consciousness of their changed

positions to each other. I need never fear again that riches are spoiling her. I must make John admire it. He shall not be so lost in contemplation of that other person's charms, that every good quality in his own people escapes him."



## CHAPTER X.

"She should never have looked at me  
If she meant I should not love her ;  
There are plenty . . . . men you call such,  
I suppose . . . . she may discover  
All her soul to, if she pleases,  
And yet leave much as she found them ;  
But I'm not so, and she knew it,  
When she fixed me glancing round them."

R. BROWNING.

LESBIA was an early visitor to Mrs. Daly's room the next morning with a bunch of violets from her own flower border, and the news spoken demurely, but with a little gleam of conscious mutual understanding creeping out from under her eyelashes. "I have persuaded John to consider this a sort of holiday. They are not going to ride to-day, or to look after anything. They are writing letters in John's study now, and reading newspapers, and soon we are going to walk. Ellen has promised to take us by a path she knows over the hills to a little lake where we shall get water-lilies out of the way of the

cabins and miserable sights just for once. I thought it would do John good."

"And me," Mrs. Daly said, drawing the bright face down to her and kissing it: "you don't know how much good you are doing me."

Lesbia had managed to take Mrs. Daly's heart by storm, and get nearer to it than anybody had been known to do for years; the bystanders noticed the friendship with wonder, not having divined the secret sympathy that united the pair.

"Do you remember this day last year?" Lesbia asked Ellen, when the two girls were standing in the hall equipped for their walk, and waiting till the library door at which they had rapped several times in vain should open. "Can you tell me what we were all doing this day last year?"

"Of course I can, because it is Connor's birthday," said Ellen; "but I wonder you remember the day. I think you did not spend it with us."

"No, but I can tell you exactly what I was doing. You had invited me to sail with you in the afternoon and come back to dine. It was the first invitation to dine out I had ever had in my life, and oh, how proud I was of it. I dressed to go; and just as I was leaving the house one of Aunt Joseph's grand friends (the people she called grand, I mean) came in a carriage to ask her to drive, and

my aunt ordered me to take my bonnet off and stay at home, because, as she would be away, I was wanted to look after the children. I spent the whole afternoon in picturing what you were all doing, and made myself miserable with the contrast between you and myself. At night I put a little cross in my almanac to mark the day, and as I wrote it I wondered whether I should be more or less unhappy when the same date came round again—whether anything particular would have happened to me. Did you ever do such a thing?”

“No, I don’t think I ever did. I used to be too happy to want to look forward.”

“Well, it was seeing that little cross in my pocket-book determined me to make an expedition with you to-day. I thought it would be a charming answer to my last year’s question. Nobody will order me to take off my bonnet and shut me up in the house this year. Dear Ellen, have I vexed you by talking of last year? I wish I had been more considerate.”

Ellen passed her fingers lightly over her eyes, and then looked up smiling.

“No, I am not vexed; for a moment I thought how glad I should be if some one who used to give me orders could come through that door, or up those steps, as he has so often done when I have been standing here, and tell me to

do—oh, anything for him ! But, Babette, I am determined I will not spoil our walk by low spirits. I know you did not plan it just for the sake of making amends to yourself for last year's disappointment ; you are as clever as other members of your family in making yourself out selfish when you are really kind. You wanted to secure mamma an easy day by keeping Pelham with us, and perhaps you thought too of gratifying me by honouring Connor's birthday. I have kept it ever since I can remember, by some pleasure expedition ; and I may tell the poor boy, mayn't I, that he was not altogether forgotten this year at Castle Daly ? ”

“ I don't know how it would be to tell him,” said Lesbia, demurely. “ Here, at last, come John and your brother. Now we may set out.”

Ellen's resolution to enjoy the walk was put to a severe trial before they had taken many steps up the steep road. Mr. Thornley, who was walking by her side, turned to her, and remarked in a tone that was meant to be indifferent, but was really full of anxiety—

“ You hear from your brother Connor frequently, I suppose ? ”

“ I had a long letter a week ago,” Ellen answered, as steadily as she could, while an uneasy vision of Connor detected in some imprudence in their own neighbourhood filled her thoughts.

"He wrote from Dublin, of course?"

"Yes, of course."

"Why don't you turn my questions back on myself, by asking why I ask?"

"Because I feel sure if you want to tell me anything you will; and if you don't there's no use in my asking."

"What an opinion of my obstinacy you must have—quite erroneous, let me tell you. I hesitate to speak because I am afraid of alarming you needlessly, though I think I ought to give you a warning."

"Then please say anything you know of Connor at once."

"It is not important, though worth mentioning, perhaps. Some men were taken up by the police last night for being found out on the hills at a later hour than is allowed by the new Vagrancy Act, which is very strictly enforced in this district just now, and in the course of their examination this morning a good deal was brought out concerning two emissaries from the Dublin clubs, who have been holding secret meetings down here, and collecting the people on the hill-sides for drill at night. One of the men, who was either very stupid, or who wanted to be bribed to tell more, let drop your brother Connor's name. The other prisoners united in swearing that the two gentlemen they had gone out to meet were perfect strangers, who had

never been seen by any one in these parts before ; and there was an attempt at explanation or mystification by some of them volunteering the remark that one of the strange gentlemen was so like your father that maybe it was a spirit, and no gentleman at all, that had harangued them on the hill-side. The police magistrate seemed satisfied, and so in fact was I ; only when you are writing to your brother you may as well let him know how thorough the vigilance is in our neighbourhood, and that his friends would be wise to withdraw while they can in safety, and carry on their play at preparations for rebellion elsewhere."

" Mr. Thornley, you should not have said that word 'play.' "

" Why not ? "

" Don't you think that when people are miserable, and angered, and desperate, and told their death-struggles are play, it is enough to goad them into terrible earnest ? It is just those contemptuous sayings that do so much harm and sow more bitterness than actual wrong."

" I did not mean it for contempt. I am paying a tribute to Young Ireland's common sense when I call the threats her representatives are flinging about mere play. I cannot suppose them to be so mad and blind as to be in earnest. To dream of plunging the country into rebellion at such a

crisis as this would be greater folly than one can conceive."

"We don't worship common sense as you do; and for my part I don't believe anything great was ever done except when that idol of yours was tossed away. It is always in crises of trouble, out of great depths, that deliverance comes."

"Yes; but what you are looking for would not be deliverance, it would be destruction."

"You don't know anything about it."

"I shall begin to think you are the 'Eva' or the 'Speranza' who write pathetic treason in the *Nation*."

"Don't sneer at them, please. I have read verses of theirs that I should indeed be proud to have written."

"For your brother Connor's sake, I am very sorry to hear you say this. I shall hardly blame him for any lengths he may go to now. It is enough to make any one a rebel to hear you talk. You should be careful."

"Can one be careful when one's heart is breaking? The very blackness of the night forces me to believe that there must be a dawn coming."

"And so there is; though perhaps you won't recognize it as such when it comes. There will come some good out of the present misery, you may be sure. It is good for the country that the surplus population is driven away, even

by stress of famine, to seek more prosperous homes elsewhere, leaving the land to be made the best of."

"Desolated that is,—turned into wide, silent, sheep-walks and great pasture-fields, with only dumb cattle in them from sea to sea. Everywhere roofless villages and deserted homes, and only here and there a few companionless people who have lost all instinct of nationality, guarding riches that are not their own. *That* would be your good; but that is just the fate we Young Irelanders are resolved to make one stand against before it is quite too late—one struggle to keep Ireland and her people together."

"You might just as well put up your hands and try to stop the sun in the sky. A country can't exist by itself in these days; it must consent to become what the rest of the world wants it to be."

"I will never agree to that. I think a country is for the people who love it best to live and be happy in, in their own way."

"Then would you leave America to red Indians for hunting-grounds and wigwams?"

"I shall not answer such an insulting question. We did not come out to quarrel, did we, Mr. Thornley? I thought it was to be for rest. We have climbed the hill while we have been arguing, and left Pelham and Lesbia far behind. Let us wait for them here at the top, for this



is the view I want Lesbia to admire. Do you see my little lake—my water-lily preserve—down there, looking like a patch of blue sky that has dropped down and been caught and held fast by the hills? I am glad Lac-na-Weel wears his crown to-day; he looks so much grander covered. He might be any height up in the mist.”

“Like Young Ireland’s dreams, seen through the mist of eloquence you are wrapping them in. I don’t so much wonder at people growing dreamy who live here, for there is glamour over everything. The very beauty of the landscape is made of cloud effects, mist-wreaths, and sunbeams. Through any other atmosphere it would be dreary enough, you must allow.”

“If you will allow that it is some credit to a country to know how to get loveliness, like this we are looking at, out of bare rocks and bog lands, and such hopes as we have out of despair.”

“Yes, if you could always be content with shadow instead of substance, and did not dash yourselves to pieces chasing one in mistake for the other.”

“I think I like shadows best,” said Ellen; “such shadows as those on the hills. I pity the people who have to leave them to live on some ugly, flat plain in America or Australia, let it be ever so substantial and fruitful.”

There was a low stone wall skirting the pathway. Ellen seated herself on it as she spoke, and began to pluck the small ferns and stonecrop that grew among the stones, letting them fall absently from her fingers as fast as she gathered them. She was feeling much alarm on Connor's account, and had made a brave effort to talk unconcernedly to conceal from her companion the shock his information had given her. And now she was glad to relax the strain and take a silent moment to argue away her fears. How glad she would be to know that Connor was safe in Dublin. She almost smiled at her own inconsistency as she confessed to herself that it was only the distant view of conspiracy and rebellion she could look at with toleration ; when it came so *near as* to bring one's own friends into danger, then it wore quite another aspect. Mr. Thornley stood by her side, watching the changes in her face, which he thought revealed the coming and going of happy or sad thoughts through her mind as clearly as the mountain sides showed the passage of clouds across the sun, and owed, like them, its haunting beauty to the alternate lights and shadows. The leaves she let fall from her fingers brought back to his memory a passage from a tale of Madame Reybaud's, which he had overheard Lesbia reading aloud to Bride a few days before. It described a last interview between two lovers, where the girl, seated on the turf by

her lover's side and telling him news that must separate them for ever, mechanically plucked and threw away as she spoke the blades of grass near her; and her lover, unseen by her, gathered them up as they fell from her fingers to keep them for ever. He remembered how absurd and sentimental he had thought the picture, as he listened. How incredible it would have seemed to him, then, that he himself could ever be so infatuated as to value dead leaves because a particular hand had plucked them—a hand whose owner was certainly not occupied with any thought of him in her absence of mind. He had not come to that point yet. He was not coveting Ellen's fern-leaves, he assured himself. Just then a little puff of wind blew one of the tiny fronds almost into his hand. He closed his fingers over it quickly, and slipped it hastily inside the cover of his pocket-book; for just then Ellen woke from her reverie and turned round to speak to him.

"Do you see that winding road skirting the foot of the hill, and the lame man plodding along it? He is singing as he goes, and as he passed below us a minute ago I caught a word or two of his song. Would you like to know what it is about?"

"Yes—he has a fine voice; I caught the sound before he was in sight, but I thought it was Irish he was singing."

"So it is; but I can give you an English version of

the words. It is a long poem, much sung about here.  
The words he is at just now are—

“ ‘Woe and pain, pain and woe,  
Are my lot night and noon—  
To see your bright face clouded so,  
Like to the mournful moon ;  
But yet will I rear your throne  
Again in golden sheen ;  
’Tis you shall reign, and reign alone,  
My dark Rosaleen,  
My own Rosaleen,  
’Tis you shall have the golden throne,  
’Tis you shall reign and reign alone,  
My dark Rosaleen.

“ ‘I could scale the blue air,  
I could plough the high hills ;  
Oh, I could kneel all night in prayer  
To heal your many ills.  
The heart in my bosom faints  
To think of you, my queen,  
My life of life, my saint of saints,  
My dark Rosaleen,  
My own Rosaleen ;  
To hear your sweet and sad complaints  
My life, my love, my saint of saints,  
My dark Rosaleen.

“ ‘Oh, the Earn shall run red  
With redundancy of blood ;  
The earth shall rock beneath our tread,  
And flames wrap hill and wood,  
And gun peal and slogan cry  
Wake many a glen serene,  
Ere you can fade, ere you can die,  
My dark Rosaleen,  
My own Rosaleen.  
The judgment hour must first be nigh  
Ere you can fade, ere you can die,  
My dark Rosaleen.’ ”

"A strangely fierce love-song! What does it mean?"

"It is the 'Roisin Dhu,' the black little Rose; and the black little Rose is Ireland, of course. The man singing it down there is Murdock Malachy, Anne O'Flaherty's servant; so you won't suspect him of being a sworn rebel. Cousin Anne has great influence, and does not allow her people to belong to secret societies, but she can't keep them from singing. You see, the Young Irelanders are not far wrong in thinking that the old love of country is strong still, and might any day burst into a blaze."

"So much the more careful should they be not to put a light to explosive forces that have power certainly to blow them and all who trust them to destruction, but can do nothing else."

"If you knew how I hate to hear you make such cold-blooded prophecies!"

"Perhaps I should not have courage to make them; the pain of vexing you for a moment might make me hold my tongue. But it would be selfish policy; you would have no reason to thank me for it by and by."

Ellen had an answer ready, but looking into Mr. Thornley's face she saw something there that made her pause and turn quickly away. "Lesbia is getting into difficulties on that last steep bit of the path," she said, "and Pelham is

too ceremonious to be of much use. I will run down and help her."

Ellen's cheeks were still flushed, and her heart beating quickly, when she succeeded in landing Lesbia in safety on the summit of the hill; but she had not asked herself the cause of the sudden tumult into which her thoughts had been thrown by Mr. Thornley's words. She would not try to find out whether the feeling called up was pleasure or dismay, or only the unconscious sympathy which the sight of a grave face stirred by unexpectedly deep feeling could not fail to evoke. There were other questions that had to be answered first, and she fancied just at the moment that she could put this one so far away that it might never come to the surface to trouble her again.

In the difficult descent of the hill, the whole party kept together, Ellen pausing now and then to point out to Lesbia the chief landmarks of the scene spread out before them. The winding road that led to Good People's Hollow, the steep ravine at the foot of Lac-na-Weel, the principal peaks of the Green Joyce Hills and of the Grey Maam Turks, whence, in old times, the rival O'Flaherty and Joyce tribes swooped down to fight in the valleys.

"Like eagles on a carcass," Mr. Thornley put in, "tearing each other to pieces for the poor spoil of the bog-lands."

"No, for the fun of the scrimmage," said Ellen defiantly.

"Poor mean-spirited creatures they'd have been for ancestors if they did not like fighting better than digging."

"And you think you don't want England to govern you?"

But Lesbia was soon too much occupied with the perils of the path to care to look about or leave any of her helpers time for conversation, and when they reached the foot of the mountain she declared herself so shaken with her various falls, and so overcome with fatigue, as to be quite unable to continue the walk. The little lake that seen from the heights had appeared to be close under the hills, proved now to be at least a mile away, and Lesbia began to be plaintive over the impossibility of ever reaching it, or of climbing up the "horrible precipice" she had stumbled down, so as to return home again.

Ellen proposed that they should take the low road leading to the river, as Lesbia's heart failed her for further climbing, and suggested to Pelham that he had better walk on before as quickly as he could, to the boat-house at the head of the lake, and bring a boat up the river to meet them, and save them several miles of this longer route. Lesbia, seeing a regretful look on Pelham's face, was beginning to protest against breaking up the party, when Ellen surprised her by seizing her hand and giving it a hasty, mysterious squeeze.

"Yes, yes; you are very tired. Indeed, Pelham, you must go. We will rest here for half an hour, and then walk slowly on, to give you time to get to the head of the lake and back to the river landing-place before we reach it. But you had better set out at once."

When Pelham had left them, Ellen turned eagerly to Mr. Thornley—

"And now you will walk on to the lake, and get us some water-lilies, while we rest. It would be so very ignominious to go back empty-handed after coming so far. I could not bear to do such a thing."

"Just for once you might. I don't like to leave you and Lesbia alone in this solitary place."

"We are very comfortable. What could happen here to hurt us?"

"Some one might come and beg. Is not that the hood of a black cloak, showing above the stone wall, up there?"

"I see nothing but a red heifer's back."

"The cloak has disappeared this minute, but it was there."

"There may be a girl watching her heifer, but what then? Even Lesbia is inured to beggars by this time. And go back to Cousin Anne without the water-lilies I will not. So, if you decline the walk, Mr. Thornley, I shall have to go myself."

"Suppose I don't find any lilies?"



"You must bring some leaves to show that you have been really there, or we won't speak to you."

"If I go, I shall make all the haste I can to get back again."

"There is no need. Pelham will be quite an hour walking to the lake, and we may as well wait here as at the landing-place, and we had much rather be alone. Do go, Mr. Thornley."

"He has gone off in a huff," said Lesbia, as her brother walked away. "What did make you so determined, Ellen? You have frightened me, for I know you have a reason for wanting to be alone; you look so eager. What are you listening for now? I hear something—a voice singing down there. Oh, I must call John to come back; I am frightened."

"No, dear Lesbia, don't. There's nothing to fear. I did want to get rid of your brother, I confess. Some one is waiting for me down there with whom I must speak a word or two alone. You may well look surprised. I will explain afterwards fully, and only say now that it's news of Connor I expect, and Anne O'Flaherty's servant, lame Murdock, who will bring it me."

"But I don't see him—there's no one near."

"Yes, listen. The voice singing seems to come from under the ground, but the place we are sitting on is really

the roof of a cave that runs far into the hill. The opening is in the hollow, to the left of us, under the rock ledge. It was once used as a still, and a rough shed was built out from the mouth of the cave, but you can't see it, because it is hidden by those tall piles of turf. I can scramble down to it in five minutes, and shall soon be back again."

"But do you mean me to stay here by myself?"

"Dear Babette, I would not ask it of you if it were not Connor's birthday. See, you will have me full in view till I reach the bottom of the hollow, then I shall disappear behind the turf-cutting for a few minutes; but if you put your mouth down to this crack in the ground and call very loud, I should hear you in the cave"

"And you will promise to tell me everything you see and hear when you come back?"

"If I can; and I'll be obliged to you all my life."

Lesbia had a spice of love of adventure and of mystery in her composition that over-ruled her timidity and induced her to consent. She felt like the heroine of one of her old foolish Whitecliffe dreams, when, after watching Ellen's disappearance under the hollow of the hill, she looked round on the solitary scene with a little thrill that had just enough fear in it to make it exciting. Pelham had passed quite out of sight, and John's figure had dwindled to a black spot in the green valley at her feet. Round

her, on all sides, were solitary hill slopes, overlooked by dark, solemn mountain peaks. A large-winged bird was hovering high in the air above her head, whirling in great curves, and poising as if it were about to swoop down upon her. An eagle? Yes, it must be one of the eagles Ellen had told her of that had their eyry on Lac-na-Weel, and swooped down for prey on to the little islands in the lonely lakes. The thought made Lesbia's pulses beat wildly till a few rapid strokes of the wide wings took the black hovering body up, up, till it looked hardly bigger than a lark in the blue sky. Then she settled herself with her elbows on her knees and her chin between her hands, to wait and think, and forbid herself to grow frightened at her loneliness. She had a pleasant sense of self-importance to counteract the solemnity of the scene, which might otherwise have been oppressive, for had not one admirer just left her with a sufficient show of reluctance, and did not this adventure promise tidings of that other lover, who, at all events, professed devotion enough to satisfy anybody? Had she ever, in the old stocking-darning days at Whitecliffe—before she had ever seen anybody in particular, when the day-dreams were woven in and out to suit the fancies of the moment—invented any beginning of a story for herself more gratifying to self-love than this? Was she not now actually acting out her own longings? Babette heaved a

great sigh as the question rose in her mind—a sight that was a testimony to the pleasantness of the old dreams, and to the much paler colours in which reality was painted. Ah, yes; but though it had come, it was not what she thought it would be. She had not imagined it all round. The dream-people who loved her gratified her vanity, and that was all. They never puzzled her, or made her anxious, or by anything they said awoke in her heart that troublesome yearning sympathy so much nearer pain than joy, that she was ready to wish it away even while she watched for the words and the looks that brought it. In her dreams it would have been to the eager, outspoken, gay-tempered lover she would have given her preference. She should never have imagined it of herself that her thoughts would turn back and back, not to the pleasant flattery of which she could always have as much as she pleased, but to a few puzzling, hesitating, grudgingly-spoken words, brimful of feeling, which seemed always to call on her for a deeper response than she was ready to make. In real life she found it was not to be all taking; there was a troublesome call for giving which threatened to draw her out of her old self-centred existence into a region of thought and emotion she had not meant to come near for a long time yet. Dreaming was much easier. Why could she not choose the flattering homage that put her back into

shadow-land, and did not offer or exact any troublesome amount of feeling on either side? Lesbia grew so absorbed in her self-debate, which did not really come in set phrases, but in vague suggestions, hard to catch and fix into any shape of words, that she did not perceive how long the time of Ellen's absence was. Neither did she notice that for some minutes past the red heifer's back had ceased to be the only conspicuous object behind the stone wall, being overtopped by a tall, awkward-looking figure, draped about the head with a black cloak, which, after regarding her deliberately for some time from behind that fortress, began gradually to draw into closer and closer neighbourhood to herself.

## CHAPTER XI.

“ Oh ! to have lived like an Irish chief, when hearts were fresh and true,  
And a manly thought, like a pealing bell, would quicken them through  
and through ;  
And the seed of a generous hope right soon to a fiery action grew,  
And men would have scorned to talk and talk, and never a deed to do.”  
C. G. DUFFY.

THE low singing which had attracted Ellen's attention had ceased by the time she had accomplished her descent into the hollow behind the hill, and come in view of the turf shed, whose green roof was so exactly like the ground above as to make its neighbourhood unsuspected till seen from below. She had spoken the truth to Lesbia when she said she expected to find Murdock Malachy in the cave, for from the top of the hill she had observed that he did not follow the road to the hollow, and she had little doubt that this secret rendezvous in the hills was his real destination. But it was a more exciting hope than that of getting information of Connor's movements from him that induced her to get rid of her companions and venture on a

visit to the mountain cave. She was on the look-out for signals, and in the muffled sounds that seemed to come from the depth of the earth, she had caught a note or two of a song that used to be a watchword between herself and Connor when they played at brigands and rebels in their childish days. All was still, however, when she reached the door of the dilapidated cabin that covered the opening into the cave, and she paused a moment, half afraid to enter. There were marks of men's footsteps—shoed feet—on the wet ground round the door, and a thin cloud of peat smoke was oozing through its crevices. There might be more than one or two people within—dare she knock ?

Again the song broke out in a sweet rich voice and accent too refined for Murdock Malachy's.

Yes, it was Connor's signal. She knocked gently ; there was a short delay as if some barricades were being removed ; the door was opened a little way, and she heard Murdock's voice exclaiming joyfully, " It's Miss Eileen herself, sir," and then she stepped across the threshold, and Murdock shut the door quickly behind her. She found herself in a low shed, having at its end a dark chamber that ran for some distance under the hill. Light poured in dusky streaks from the crevices in the roof and between the loose stones of which the walls were built, struggling with the smoke of the peat-fire that burned dimly in the lower

chamber and filled the place with a bewildering blue haze. In the centre was a table composed of two empty casks turned on end. A candle stuck in a hole of one cast a flickering light upon some papers with which the person who rose at the sound of Murdock's voice had been occupied. For a moment Ellen only saw a tall grey-coated figure and a head covered with a mass of sunny hair, that looked exactly like what she had expected to see; and she came forward holding out both hands.

"Connor, you naughty boy, why do you run such risks?"

And then, as the haze cleared and the figure approaching her passed under a streak of sunshine, she paused. It was not Connor.

"A great deal more like my father than either of his sons," the sentence of Connor's letter that had moved her so much when first read, flashed back into her mind, but not to win entire acquiescence. She saw the strong likeness, but this face on which the dusty sunshine fell had a look of fire and endurance about it—a mingling of sadness and eagerness; a possibility of strong, stern passion expressed in its marked lines, that gave it an altogether different character from the playful, satirical, indolent face of Dermot Daly. The two who had come so suddenly into each other's presence stood still in silence for a few seconds,



not embarrassed, but each curiously and intently scanning the other—he, with eyes penetrating and kindly, that seemed to be taking her measure; and she, glancing up, half attracted and half awed, as she realized that this was the leader to whom Connor at least, and how many others, had given themselves up, the possible hero and deliverer in whom Connor devoutly believed.

“It’s Miss Eileen herself, sir,” Murdock put in, thinking from the silence that some further ceremony of introduction was due.

“My cousin, Ellen Daly, of whom, as ‘Miss Eileen herself,’ I have heard every day since I came here,” the stranger said, putting out his hand, and Ellen gave hers, not wondering any longer, now she had seen the smile that altered the whole face as her name was spoken, either at Connor’s description or at his infatuation. She had heard and read of heroes and leaders to follow the light of whose smile thousands were ready to face danger amid death. Was this one of them? And what, in these terrible times, was he here to do?

“But where is Connor? I came here expecting to meet my brother,” she said.

“Did you not meet him out on the hill? Murdock reported your neighbourhood just now, and nothing would serve your brother but he must borrow a cloak of the old

woman who is cooking our dinner in the cave there, and go up on to the hill for the chance of getting a word with you in private. There is a secret way through the cave where the old still used to be, to a trap-door that opens behind a stone wall on the hill. He instructed me to sing a certain song at the end of ten minutes to warn him not to stay too long."

"Ah, the cunning of him!" Ellen could not help exclaiming. "How cleverly he has contrived to have his own way in spite of my warnings and entreaties. It was not me at all, it was my friend Miss Maynard he wanted to see. He knew I should follow that song, and so he should secure a word with her alone. I am afraid you have a fellow-worker very difficult to keep in order, who is willing to imperil the gravest matters for any whim that crosses his mind."

"We know that sort well enough; but he is hearty, and troubled with neither doubts nor fears."

"Ah, that's because he does not think enough to have doubts."

"He does not think at all, that brother of yours; the better and happier he. The work we are engaged in needs either people who can think a long way on, far out of ordinary sight, or who do not think at all; and the non-thinkers are the best off, and can go most heartily into it.

You see, I am speaking openly to you, taking you for one of the generous sisterhood who have thrown in their lot with ours, and who make our hopes possible by believing them."

"I am not sure that I deserve such confidence," Ellen said, hesitatingly, while tears welled up into her eyes. "I am not one of the women who inspire such enterprises as yours. I can be miserable for Ireland, but that is all. It is not thinking at all with me, it is just feeling, and one cannot feel a long way on, so as to forget the present, and not count the cost. I am not brave enough to be one of the inspirers."

"Yes, you are. I read one of your letters to your brother and nothing ever moved me so deeply. If to know that the women of one's country are miserable for her degradation is not enough to make the men fight—if the tears of such as you are not enough, then there is nothing left to fight for. We shall never be a nation again; we are too dead for hope. But it is not so, we mean you to triumph for Ireland just as deeply as you have grieved."

He took her hand again as he spoke, and stooping down kissed the tips of her fingers. She was startled but not embarrassed; it was too clearly a homage to her feeling, and not to herself, rendered by one possessed by a single thought and quivering with every touch of emotion that

answered to it, for there to be room for personal consciousness to come in.

She was anxious to end the interview, however, for Connor's rashness frightened her, and she dreaded Mr. Thornley's finding him with Lesbia.

"I wish Connor would come," she said; "I want to speak a word with him, though it will only be to warn him against imprudence. Did you not say there was a shorter way of getting out on the hill-side than by climbing round the edge of the hollow?"

"Yes, if you can scramble up an old chimney: but here is your brother coming feet foremost among the peat sods. That is one of our ways of exit and entrance here. You see, we don't scruple to let you into the secrets of the place."

Ellen had a severe remonstrance ready, but when Connor emerged from the blackness at the end of the cave—his merry face looking out of the folds of the old cloak still wrapped round his head—her anger vanished; she had nothing to say as she threw her arms round his neck but "Oh, Connor, Connor, how could you do it?"

"How could I do what? Play such a nice game at hide-and-seek with you, Eileen aroon, on my birthday?"

"Little enough I came into your thoughts. Have you frightened Lesbia out of her wits?"

"Not at all, it was thinking too much of me the darling girl was, to be surprised to see me; I have made her own it. Was she to keep my birthday, and I not to appear out of the earth by magic to thank her?"

"If she were the same little Babette she was last year, and not a great heiress, and if we did not owe so much to her brother, I would not mind your nonsensical wooing; but as it is—don't hate me, Connor dear—I shall be obliged to warn Mr. Thornley, if you hang about her and try to get round her in secret ways. I cannot let him go away to England and leave Lesbia under our care, unless you will promise to keep out of the way."

"He is going away to England! Hurrah! Once let us get rid of his meddling hands and prying eyes, and we'll do some good here, D'Arcy and I."

"But I shall warn him of your doings with Lesbia, and he'll stay."

"You have not the heart. Think what I'll do for the cause if I get her and her thousands to help us."

"It would be base. Ask your friend what he would think of such conduct."

"Ask him I will, and welcome; he's too stanch to stick at anything that would help on the cause. Would you have him weigh the good of the country against a dirty bit of money of anyone's?"

"Well, I have warned you; and now I must go. Mr. Thornley will be back and miss me."

"How cleverly you got rid of him. I heard it all from behind the wall, and did not I tingle with impatience till Pelham was fairly off? It was awkward your bringing him here to-day. He possibly might have taken it into his head to refresh his memory with a look round, and if he had put his head in here, would not he have got even a bigger fright than he had when he first made acquaintance with the place?"

"Was Pelham ever here?"

"Have you forgotten Lictor? This is Dennis's old still; and here, just where you are standing, was where Lictor was shot."

"I hate to think of it, Connor; it seems as if that was the beginning of all our troubles."

"It can't be helped now. Come on. I'll take you round the edge of the hill. If Mr. Thornley is there, he won't know me from an old woman, with the cloak round my head, and I'll answer for little Lesbia having presence of mind to toss me a halfpenny."

As they left the shed, Ellen shook hands with D'Arcy.

"I am glad to have seen you, cousin," she said.

"And I you, if we never meet again. I have too few belonging to me not to value every chance of changing my

dreams of them to remembrances, above anything else that concerns myself."

"There, what do you think of him?" cried Connor, triumphantly, when they had emerged into daylight again.

"I like him. I see what you mean about his having power 'to draw all creatures living under the sun, after him, so as you never saw,' like the Pied Piper."

"And he'll do it to some purpose one day, Eileen aroon : it was quite as much to show him to you as to speak with Lesbia, that I wiled you in there. Is not he glorious ? I should like Cousin Anne to see him."

"Why can't you both go like Christians and stay with Cousin Anne, instead of lurking in caves and dens of the earth like——"

"Patriots as we are. No, no ; we have too much conscience to involve Cousin Anne unbeknown to herself in our lawless doings ; but, Ellen, he wants beyond anything to see the inside of Castle Daly. His mother used to talk to him about the place when he was a little lad in the wilds of America, and he thinks all the world of it. I have promised he shall at least see our old schoolroom, and the black-framed likeness of Aunt Ellen that hangs over the chimney-piece."

"Impossible, Connor ; you could not take him secretly to the Thornleys' house."

"Could not I? What do you say to my having found the key to the little door in the north turret, convenient in the pocket of an old coat the very day I left Dublin? I have been in and out that way often enough to know it, I suppose."

"But the rooms are altered; the north wing is seldom used, and the door of communication at the head of the turret stairs is generally locked."

"It will be open, you'll see, on the night we pay you a visit, when you'll have the little trifle of money we spoke about ready for me. I can't possibly get back to Dublin without it, I assure you."

"Connor, I can't let you draw Lesbia into deceit."

"Give me credit for a grain of conscience, at least; we are not so badly off for followers that we need enlist her little frightened wits into our service. I flatter myself that there are servants in Castle Daly still that would do a good deal more for me than for their master. Ask Miss Maynard where she thinks the little bunch of forget-me-nots she found on her dressing-table this morning came from."

"Connor, it's too bad. I believe it's all joke with you. I quarrelled with Mr. Thornley a few minutes ago for accusing us of playing at rebellion; but I do think it's nothing but play with you."



“Well—he—the fellow in there, has grim earnest for the two of us ; and for the rest, don’t be rash. Some day, perhaps, when the opportunity comes, you’ll see whether it’s most earnest or play with me. I don’t think I’ll be the worse for getting all the fun I can out of what comes in my way now. It’s little enough pleasure there is in life this year for any one. There, put your foot on my knee for the last scramble up the cliffs and over the wall. And now I’d better vanish, but don’t be too down-hearted. You have not seen quite the last of me.” He disappeared for an instant, but before Ellen had gone many steps forward down the slope of the hill, his head wrapped in the old cloak again emerged from the shelter of the wall, and he called her back to whisper, “Remember, she believes firmly that I came all the way from Dublin for the sake of seeing her for ten minutes on my birthday ; and if you undeceive her you’ll make me no better than a spy and an informer, and drive me to hang myself. I’ve warned you fairly.”

Ellen found Lesbia still occupying the precise spot where she had left her, and looking as demure as if she had been employed the whole time of her absence in gathering sprays of sundew, and spreading out the little rayed discs on her hand as she was doing then.

“Did you—did you find the person you thought would

give you news of Connor?" she asked, peeping shyly up into Ellen's face from under her eyelashes as Ellen seated herself by her side.

In spite of fear, vexation, and anxiety, Ellen could not help bursting out into a hearty laugh.

"Babette, at least you and I need not humbug each other. I want to tell you how sorry I am that Connor should have been so silly and taken such a liberty with you."

"I suppose it was silly, such a waste of time, when he ought to have been studying. Bride and John would be very much annoyed if they knew; they would never think I was safe again."

"Nobody ever is angry with Connor, but he really deserves their anger and yours."

"Of course I am very angry. Yet perhaps one can hardly call it a liberty. It was a long journey to take just for the chance of seeing one for a few minutes. I don't think I ever heard of such a thing being done for any one before—did you?"

"Only a wild boy like Connor would be so foolish; it is not worth thinking about."

"Oh, I shall certainly not think of it again, nor mention it to John and Bride. It is better not to make them anxious—don't you think so?"

"Of course, I had rather not have my brother's folly

exposed ; but you must do as you think right, Lesbia ; I dare not ask you not to tell."

"One does not like every little thing that happens to one to be thought of consequence, just because one happens to be an heiress," said Lesbia, pouting a little.

"It would be nothing to me, if it were not my brother Connor, for whom I always feel responsible," said Ellen.

"Ah, well, let us clamber down into the road, and set out to meet John, and think no more about it. You will not tell your brother Pelham ; he must not know, of course. But—but I wonder what he would think if he heard that anybody, say the silliest person in the world, had travelled right across Ireland just to speak to poor little me, on his birthday. *He* would wonder that anyone should think it worth while, would not he ?"

"I am sure I don't know. We had better walk on and hasten Mr. Thornley's movements. Look at the length of our shadows, it must be very late ; Pelham will be tired of waiting for us at the landing-place."

When John appeared at last, he had to confess to having managed to sprain his ankle badly in leaping back to the shore of the lake from the island of waterlilies. He brought a large cluster of buds and flowers, but it only needed a glance in his face to see that the return walk along the rough road with the injured ankle had been a severe

struggle. Lesbia's flushed cheeks escaped notice under cover of concern at her brother's accident; and during the next uncomfortable hour—while John Thornley limped along the road, frowning with pain and making strenuous efforts to keep up cheerful conversation with his companions, which neither of them could second—Ellen was brought to reproach herself for a feeling of relief that had come to her on her first sight of Mr. Thornley's condition. She began to be sorry for his sufferings, though she could not help still hugging the thought that now at least for some days to come Connor and his friend would be safe from observation of the keenest-witted person in the neighbourhood, and that her difficulty about accepting the charge of Lesbia might now be left to settle itself. It was a real relief at last when the boat was reached and Mr. Thornley subsided into a seat and allowed that he did not think he could have held on many minutes longer. He was quite beyond talking when the necessity for exertion was over, and lay back faint and pale, while Lesbia sat by him and sprinkled him with water, and Ellen and Pelham took the oars.

The sun had reached his point of disappearance behind Lac-y-Core by the time they entered the lake; the little island, with its ivy-draped ruin, that, seen in sunshine from the hill had glowed like an emerald in its setting of

opal water, looked dark and imposing now in deep shadow. The eastern distance lay painted in every delicate tint, from intense purple to softest lilac and grey-blue; the bare tops of the Maam Turks, with the sun behind them, stood out against a cloudless sky in a wondrous haze of crimson fire, their rough outlines softened and clothed with a marvellous tender beauty that belonged to the atmosphere and the hour.

Mr. Thornley dragged himself up from the recumbent position which Lesbia had enjoined on him, to enjoy the scene.

"Glamour, is it not?" he said, smiling to Ellen. "One would think oneself sailing straight to the fortunate isles to live on lotus-fruit in peace for ever. Who would think it was all bog and rock, and swamp and water?"

"And famine and strife and woe!" Ellen continued to herself. "And oh! were the high hopes and the generous purposes glamour too?"

## CHAPTER XII.

"She loves you, then ?  
One flash of hope burst : then succeeded night,  
And all's at darkest now. Impossible."

*Colombe's Birthday.*

MR. THORNLEY'S accident brought precisely the result Ellen had foreseen. The proposed journey to London had to be put off, and to give himself a chance of undertaking it before the spring was quite over, he had to submit to lie up and abstain from all use of the injured ankle for many days. Nothing was heard of Connor, and Ellen ceased to start at unexpected sounds, and began to look eagerly for letters in the hope of seeing Connor's handwriting on an envelope stamped "Dublin" again. The days of Mr. Thornley's captivity were decidedly pleasant days to everyone in the house. After experiencing one or two of them, Ellen understood the complacency with which Bride Thornley congratulated herself on being bound to a brother who knew how to stay in

the house reasonably, and could be cut off from his ordinary occupations without making himself and everybody near him miserable. During the press of the sorrowful business of the past winter, some literary work, in which John Thornley had previously been much interested, had had to be laid aside, and now he and Bride turned back to it with a zeal that sometimes carried Ellen's sympathies with theirs, and sometimes left her (she not being of the essential student nature) lost in astonishment at their power of abstraction from present interests. She sat once or twice through an hour or two of a rainy afternoon, listening to their eager discussions in almost absolute silence, while wonder grew in her mind, till it was almost indignation, at the sight of two thoughtful people occupying themselves, while suffering such as she knew of was going on all around, with discussions as to the relative merit of Charles Lamb's and Addison's styles of essay writing; the secret cause of Dean Swift's melancholy; or even the share which Rousseau's dreams of the perfectibility of human nature had had in bringing about the reckless disregard of individual human life which marked the first French Revolution. She thought the talk even more heartless when, instead of forgetting the present time, they spoke eagerly of it for the sake of searching out analogies to its woes in past periods of

history; fitting cause and effect, and probable remote consequences, with a satisfaction in the completeness of the chain of reasoning that made them appear like dissectors calmly gathering knowledge from the throes of a living subject. Then the recollection of a face written over with deep lines of indignation and pity; of a few words, lately heard, breathing restless impatience of wrong, came back to her with a glow of sympathetic approval and content. Surely it was nobler to grow wild with pain at the sight of a great calamity, and spend oneself in frantic efforts to arrest its progress, than to be able to stand aside and chronicle the death throes and photograph the victim's glazing eyes, and speculate philosophically on what was to come when the agony had passed.

Once or twice John divined by the expression of her face, which was beginning to be an open book to him, the course her thoughts had taken, and when his and Bride's arguments came to an end, he tried a little wistfully to draw out an expression of opinion from her, and gain an opportunity of setting himself right in her eyes. Then the conversation was apt to take a plunge into depths of metaphysics, where the three sometimes found standing ground whence they could get glimpses of each other's points of view concerning the practical matters they seemed to have left far behind them. John would ac-



knowledge the hardening effect on character of looking at life chiefly from the intellectual side, and confess that even in great questions, of politics or sociology, the want of due appreciation of the subtler emotions and spiritual sources of individual and national life was a fatal hindrance to penetrating to the truth of things, and caused the calculations of the science that takes note only of tangible results to prove itself folly when tested by experience. Bride, following her brother's lead, would bring examples from history of great results which had sprung from some unpremeditated word or deed of generous enthusiasm, or divine folly of self-sacrifice. Then Ellen listened complacently again, thinking of an enthusiasm which they had pronounced folly a few minutes before, but which might yet prove itself to be the very conduct they were now admiring. One or two rainy afternoons spent in such talk had the effect of years of ordinary intercourse in making the sharers in it known to each other. Ellen fell into a habit of referring in thought to the brother's and sister's standard on all occasions when a judgment had to be formed, and began to feel as if she had spent half a lifetime in their company instead of a few days.

The last piece of literary work Mr. Thornley undertook during his imprisonment was an essay on the poetry of

Young Ireland. It grew from his having to listen to numerous quotations from the poems of Connor's friends, which had served Ellen for arguments in their political discussions. At his request she brought out her store of ballads cut from the *Nation* newspaper. And to secure that justice should be done to the merits of the verses, she undertook to read them aloud herself.

"Who is it that signs himself 'D'Arcy'?" asked Bride, looking over Ellen's shoulder, as she finished a poem which had called out all her powers of effective reading; "there is surely something of the true ring about his verses; and how well Ellen always reads them."

"Give the paper to me. I shall better know what the poem is worth when I read it to myself," John said, stretching out his hand for the newspaper Ellen held.

She looked up suddenly, and saw an expression of keen anxiety in the eyes that, unknown to her, had been studying her face as she read, and she could not help starting and colouring violently. She had quite forgotten where she was; the lighted drawing-room had faded away from before her eyes as she spoke the words, and she had been seeing the turf shieling under the hill, and the dusty sunrays streaming through a chink in its roof on to a face that, now she had once seen it, seemed to furnish a comment on the words she was repeating. It was start-

ling to be called back to her present surrounding by the consciousness that her thoughts were being guessed at by some one near; and she was angry with herself for the agitation that would increase the more she thought about it, as if she had been guilty of betraying a secret. Mr. Thornley withdrew his eyes from her face; but as he folded and rustled the paper, she heard a quick impatient sigh. Bride had meanwhile taken up a sheet that Ellen had laid aside a few minutes before, and was busy with it.

"Surely there is unusual power of picturesque description here too. John, just listen to the first verse again—

" 'Long, long ago, beyond the misty space  
Of twice a thousand years,  
In Erin old there dwelt a mighty race  
Taller than Roman spears.  
Like oaks and towers, they had a giant grace,  
Were fleet as deers,  
With woods and waves they made their hiding-place,  
These western shepherd seers.'

Such pictures in a few words one does not often get from an unknown young poet."

"How do you know he is young?—that strikes me as practised writing."

"He is young," said Ellen. "The author of those verses is also a friend of Connor's. He began to write very early, I have heard. He was thrown on his own resources when he was almost a child, and was editing a paper in

America at eighteen. He is sub-editor of the *Nation* now."

"And a hero in your eyes, I perceive," said John.

"Other people have had to provide for themselves at eighteen, and for their brothers and sisters too, without anyone taking them for heroes," said Bride, looking at her brother.

"That has nothing whatever to do with what we are talking about," answered John, sharply, and evidently annoyed. "Let me have all the newspapers. I will look over Young Ireland's effusions at my leisure, and see what I can make of them. Two of the poets are at least worth demolishing."

Ellen, who had now recovered her self-possession, proceeded to collect the newspapers, and arrange them according to date. "I hope I have not done the Young Ireland poets any harm by reading their verses aloud," she said. "I want you to write a good review. I know they feel it hard that no one in England takes any notice of what they write, let it be ever so powerful. It is like sounding a trumpet to deaf people. Perhaps you might act as a sort of conductor, and carry the sounds into an atmosphere that will reach more ears."

"I will write my best after that," said John, with a glow on his pale face; "and as for your reading, I was

thinking, just as you spoke, that if I were dead, and you were to come and read verses of mine over my grave as you have read those, the sound would stir the frozen blood about my heart, and call me back to life again. It would be enough, I should say, to satisfy any poet's ambition to hear you read his verses once."

"I think we had better open the window to let out the poetical afflatus," remarked Bride, dryly. "The room is so full of exaggeration it is getting into our heads."

"Not into mine," said Ellen, laughing. "I know well enough that nothing will ever satisfy Connor's ambition but a paragraph of unmitigated praise in a *Quarterly Review*, and it is Mr. Thornley, not I, who can give him that."

For the next day or two, Mr. Thornley shut himself into his study to write, and as Bride was occupied with preparations for the journey to London, which was fixed for the end of the week, Ellen spent her time with Lesbia among her old haunts on the hills and lake. Sometimes Pelham accompanied them in their walks; and sometimes Mrs. Daly was persuaded to take a seat in a boat, or to share a drive, and in her company Lesbia was always her best and sweetest self, not the shy, shrinking Babette of Whitecliffe days, nor yet the self-conscious heiress, who aired little whims and graces to the annoyance of John

and Bride, but a pleasant mixture of coaxing sweetness and pretty deference that exactly hit Mrs. Daly's requirements in a companion, and brought out Pelham's conversational powers to such an extent that Ellen found herself at liberty to follow out her own thoughts undisturbed. She was not sorry to be left to herself. Just for those days, underneath all the anxiety that possessed her, there was a glow of renewed hope and confidence that coloured her musings with a brighter tint than they had known for many a day. It startled her, as falling in curiously with the current of her thoughts, when one afternoon, Pelham, detaining her for a few minutes' conversation in the garden, after Lesbia had gone into the house, began his communications by asking, in a grave tone—

"Ellen, what motive do you suppose induces John Thornley to take so much trouble on our account, and make such sacrifices as he does to help us?"

She had been depending on his help; but it had not occurred to her to question the motive for its being so freely given, till Pelham put it to her.

"Do you mean anything fresh?" she asked, remembering, after a minute's thought, that the service she was most counting on just now could not have entered into Pelham's calculations.

"Every day brings something fresh; and as I have no

one to consult but you, I want you to help me to consider whether we are not letting ourselves be bound by greater obligations than it is right for us to accept from anyone."

"Dear Pelham, how kind of you to consult me!" said Ellen, stroking the arm she held fondly, and looking up into his face with as much gratitude as if he had offered her a crown.

Pelham was touched. "I am sure I don't want to keep you out of my confidence," he said, a little huskily. "I am lonely enough, and we three ought to hold together, for we have not much else but each other to hold on to. If I have not consulted you and Connor hitherto, it is because you always seem to be looking so far ahead that you have no attention for what is passing."

"You shall always find us ready to attend to whatever occupies you for the future. We will make a triple alliance, dear Pelham—so close, that neither Pelham Court Pelhams nor Thornleys shall ever come between us again."

"There is no need to guard against Pelham Court interference now, Ellen. My chief annoyance is the cool way in which Uncle Charles hands over our affairs to John Thornley, leaving him to meet all difficulties as they arise in the best way he can. As long as our misfortune seemed manageable, Uncle Charles was ready enough to help, but now that it has passed beyond his experience, he

refuses to believe in it—he turns his back upon us, and leaves things to take their course.”

“If Mr. Thornley had done the same?”

“We should have been ruined as utterly as any of the poor wretches who are turned out of their little holdings to earn enough Indian meal on the public works to keep themselves from starving. Ellen, you and I are almost, if not quite, as truly *beggars*, living this year on charity, as that gang of men with pickaxes over their shoulders who are crawling miserably past our gate just now. I am sorry to startle you, dear, by saying such a thing, but it is true.”

“But why is it so? How have things grown so bad with us?”

“The famine. There has not been a shilling of rent paid this year on the estate, and will not be; yet the interest on the mortgages has to be made up. The holders are ready to come down on us at the first failure, and are only held off by the remittances John Thornley pays out of his own pocket.”

“But is he so rich? I thought it was Lesbia who had all the money.”

“He had a legacy—and he calls paying our debts speculating with his fortune, and says he has a right to do what he pleases with his own.”

“Then we are actually depending on him?”



"The rent paid for the Castle has been our chief resource through the winter; but what a transparent pretence it is—their choosing to rent it from us this year. The old residents are flying the country as if it were plague-stricken, as indeed it is—and they stay on. It must be for our sakes; but why? I want you to help me to solve the puzzle, and consider whether we can continue to accept his charity!"

"You expected Uncle Charles to do more for us?"

"I think he might take a little more trouble. I think he might be kinder to my mother and you, and offer you a home, instead of leaving you to be obliged to comparative strangers for a shelter."

"Pelham, dear, you make me feel very guilty when you say that. There is something to be said in excuse for Uncle Charles, and I have only been waiting for a good opportunity to tell you. I had another letter from Marmaduke just before we came here."

"And you have answered it?"

"Yes; mamma was very kind, and told me to write just what I pleased; and if you will be as good to me, Pelham, and try not to blame me more than you can help, for keeping mamma out of her old home—I will be so grateful to you"

"I can be sorry for your decision without blaming you.

You have a right to choose for yourself; but I have always thought Marmaduke a very good fellow, and that you were lucky to please him."

"Yes, I know everyone thought so—certainly everyone at Pelham Court—and that would not have made it easier for me to go there as Marmaduke's wife. I should not have gone only to him, but to them all. It would have been just the same with me as when I stayed there three years ago; and Pelham, I don't think I could condemn myself to carry such a sore, angry heart to the end of my life, as I had then. They did not mean to hurt me, but their way of thinking of me as altogether different from themselves crept out at every other word. They were always telling me how Irish I was. It was Irish exaggeration, Irish blundering, Irish romance, whenever I spoke a word that came fresh from my head or warm out of my heart. Yet, for mamma's sake, and to satisfy you, I think I could have borne it all, if it could have been in any other way than just the way Marmaduke wanted. That would not have been honest. He likes me as I am, poor fellow, and would have expected me to go on being myself in spite of them all, and I am not strong enough. He would have been disappointed, just as Connor and I used to be disappointed in our butterfly chases, when we closed our hands on a purple-emperor, and found, on opening

them, that there was nothing inside but broken wings and dust. Don't you think that there is truth in what I say, Pelham, dear? You'd like me to be true, above all; would you not?"

"Yes," said Pelham, deliberately, after a moment's silence; "you were quite right, Ellen; and whatever trouble is before us, I promise never to reproach you with what you have thrown away. I know more about it than you suppose. You are not the only one of us who has felt out of place at Pelham Court. I have not forgotten what I suffered when I first went to live there as a little fellow, and they used to show me like a curiosity to their friends, as their cousin from Connaught, and wonder, before my face, that I had not higher spirits, and did not make Irish bulls. I used to vow to myself never to speak an unnecessary word. If I am a dull, reserved fellow now, you must put it down to the training in silence I had then. After all, I am afraid sometimes that I am as Irish at heart as any of you—if feeling a great deal more than is convenient makes me so."

"Oh, Pelham, thank you for saying that! Now we are real brother and sister."

"But, whatever I am at the core, I keep the horror that grew up with me of acting so as to draw on myself the charges usually brought against Irishmen. Conduct that,

under certain circumstances, I might have been capable of, becomes impossible to me when I remember the contempt I have heard poured on it at Pelham Court as the usual resource of a broken-down Irish gentleman."

"But what conduct?"

"Ruined Irishmen are always said at Pelham Court to mend their fortunes by marrying heiresses."

"Mamma was not an heiress—they cannot say that of——"

"No, no!—and yet you must have noticed the pitying tone in which they always speak of our mother there, as if she had, if not degraded, at least done very badly for herself in marrying an Irishman."

"Why do you recall that now?"

"To lead you back to the question we began with."

"You are thinking of Connor and Lesbia."

"Of Connor? Oh no, he never was in earnest."

"Jest and earnest are so mixed up together in Connor, one cannot say. It would not have been another person's earnest, but I believe it was his."

"The worse for us all. There is no use in shutting our eyes to facts. Day by day we are sinking lower and lower, and every step down brings with it another link in the chain of obligation to the people who any day may possess themselves of all we are losing. Do you think John

Thornley's kindness is meant in any way to lay an obligation on me not to try—not to win—in short, has he, do you think, the Pelham Court notion of an Irishman's method of repairing his broken fortunes?—and does he intend by every service he forces on us to show me that it would be treachery in me to—the thought is intolerable! His meaning or not meaning it changes nothing in the facts—but I could not bear to be taking bribes; to feel that it was obligation, not my own sense of honour alone, that guarded every word and look."

"My poor Pelham! how I wish it was not such deep earnest with you."

"I can't understand such a thing being at all, if it is not earnest. Of course I know perfectly well that there is to be no end to it. Let the worst fortune come that can come, I will never be the seedy Irishman that worms himself into idle comfort again through a woman's good will, nor shall Connor so degrade himself, if I can prevent it."

"And suppose poor little Lesbia should love the one or the other of you?"

"You have no reason to think she does."

"I do not say I have; and at all events, Pelham, no one can accuse you of giving her the opportunity. The 'Cadet de Colobrière' himself, who, by the way, now I come to

think of it, is Lesbia's favourite romance-hero just at present, was not more *farouche* than you are."

"I don't want to make a bear of myself. I am not such an idiot as to think there is any need. I only grow savage when this question of the motive of John Thornley's kindness puzzles me ; and his favours begin to look like bribes."

"His kindness has never astonished or puzzled me. I know quite well that he feels as if he could never do enough for us, and that all he has belongs more to us than to himself. Though he is so much more your friend than mine, I understand him better than you do, and give him credit for higher motives. It has not anything to do with you and Lesbia. All his conduct to us is influenced by—just that night—you know what I mean. Our father died in his place ; and when he took him out of my arms, I believe he felt as if he took upon himself all the care for us that our father would have had. I don't think you need scruple to accept any service from him : it comes to him as duty with the life that, but for our father's generosity, would have ended that night."

"But he has never said a word of the kind. I should not think he is at all the sort of man to have such a romantic idea of duty. You know they would call it so at Pelham Court. They would put that down as one of your

sentimental Irish ideas, and scout the possibility of its influencing Uncle Charles's model man of business, John Thornley."

"Then they don't know him as well as I do. Sentimental or not, the thought did not come out of my mind at all. I have read it in his face a dozen times. Some faces have such a great deal in them ; and do you know, Pelham, I begin to think it is the plain faces that bear best to be looked at, and are the beautiful ones after all. Yes, I know it is an Irish bull ; but I mean exactly what I say. I have found it out lately. I used to call Miss Thornley and her brother plain, but since I have been here, I have seen looks on their faces that are beyond anything for what they tell you."

"Whatever Thornley's motives may be, my position of dependence on him remains the same ; and you can't wonder at my finding it galling, and longing to escape somehow. If only I were not such a fool !—if I could do anything !"

"It seems to me that you are doing a great deal. Let us, just for argument's sake, suppose that all the Daly estates had passed into the Thornleys' hands, that they were owners and you the agent, you would still be working and earning fairly what you receive."

"About a tenth part—for my work is not worth much.

I am only learning. The rest of our income would be charity, and is."

"You are so resolutely sensible, dear Pelham, you won't let the least little touch of illusion come in to hide the ugly bare outlines of fact. That is Pelham Court training, and it does make things hard for you."

"At the best it is difficult enough to accept obligations gracefully, and not let them make one feel mean."

"There are plenty of people have to do it this year. What we feel about the Thornleys' bounty is only a twinge of the great pain all Ireland is feeling at having to take relief from England. There are some who can't bear it at all, who are just driven wild with the shame of having to be fed by the hands that have oppressed and robbed us hitherto. They think it would be better to break loose before the new chains are bound round us, and die free. You can understand their feeling for the nation what you feel for yourself, can you not, Pelham dear?"

"I can understand it and blame it too. I don't mean to encourage myself in bitterness, however great the temptation may be. When things are at the blackest, and one's way hardest to see, what is the use of raising more mists? Whether it is hope or anger that creates them, they can only bewilder. Let us do our best in our extremity to see clearly and walk straight."



"I shall have a chance of growing wise, now you take me in hand. We must indeed help each other, Pelham, for we have a great deal to bear. How pretty the village looks from here—the freshly white-washed cabins, the broad road overhanging the water, and the green shore of the lake! Who would think there was sorrow and death in it? Pelham, since we must leave all this, and leave it spoilt and sad, I am glad that you have not often been here; that your life has not struck such deep roots about the place as mine and Connor's."

"I don't know. Sometimes I think I shall feel the break-up more than either of you. I shall always be sorry that I did not care for the poor old place while it was ours."

Just then the bell for the Angelus from the little white-washed chapel in the village sounded. Ellen clasped her hands round her brother's arm, and held him motionless and silent where they were standing for a moment or two.

"Just think," she said, when they turned again towards the house, "what a great cry of anguish went up to-night from all Ireland with the Angelus bell: 'Pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of death!' and the hour of death so near to thousands everywhere throughout the land now. As I stood still that moment I could almost believe that I felt and heard the great throb and cry for help go pulsing

up to the throne of God. We must comfort ourselves by remembering that He heard it surely."

An expression of reverent gravity remained on Ellen's face till she had parted from Pelham in the hall and mounted the first flight of the staircase on her way to her mother's room; and then, at a sudden thought, she turned and ran back to him in one of those rapid changes of mood that were so incomprehensible to him. Resting both hands on his shoulders, she looked smilingly in his face—

"Now, my dear Cadet de Colobrière—no, Aîné de Daly, I mean"—she said, "I am not coming down to dinner to-day; mamma is tired, and I am going to make tea for her in her room, and I lay a solemn charge on you not to be *farouche*. I assure you, on my honour, that the commonplace talking individual is the least dangerous of the two, and that your conscience imposes it upon you to be extremely agreeable, and to make the evening in my absence a pleasure instead of a weariness to our hosts. Now, attend, I shall take means to learn how you conduct yourself."

On her way down to dinner, Bride Thornley turned into the pretty boudoir opening from Mrs. Daly's bedroom to see that everything was comfortably arranged for the evening meal Ellen and her mother were to share there. Prosperity agreed with Bride Thornley's looks—that is to

say, the neat figure and small-featured, colourless, intellectual face that had looked insignificant when she was clad in the scanty drab garments she had affected when left to her own devices, had an air of refinement, and even of distinction, when set off by the rich dark silks and judiciously chosen ribbons and laces that Lesbia's taste imposed. Neither were the other outside appliances of wealth so incapable of giving Miss Thornley pleasure as she was apt to imagine, when she looked back lovingly on her days of struggle. As she satisfied herself of her guests' comfort, she glanced round with evident satisfaction on the pleasant room; the sofa drawn in front of a cosy wood fire; the dainty tea-service, whose bright silver and delicately-coloured china reflected the glow of the flames; the softly falling curtains and rich carpets that made a pretty background to the two figures seated by the fire. She certainly enjoyed making her guests welcome to so much comfort, and was pleased to find herself the moving-spring of a well-regulated household.

Ellen noticed the expression of complacency that crossed her face, as she lingered a minute or two by the door, making hospitable suggestions to Mrs. Daly; and when they were alone, she turned to her mother with an impatient sigh that had much wonder and a spice of contempt in it.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "this is all new to Miss Thornley; she can admire the house as it is now, and fancy that the finery does not spoil it."

"She is a very clever woman," Mrs. Daly answered, echoing Ellen's sigh; "if I had been as clever——."

"Oh, mamma! don't—don't wish you had turned the dear old Castle into a cockney paradise while he was in it. How he would have hated the stiff prim life, and all the little fads and formalities they make such a parade over."

"You are prejudiced, Ellen. The quiet and order are delightful to me; and I cannot help feeling more comfortable here now, changed as everything is, and sad as I must be, than I used to feel in the old days of waste and confusion. This is what I was accustomed to in my youth; and when one is growing old, it is to the habits of one's childhood one turns back with pleasure. I lie here with my eyes shut, listening to the stillness, or to the regular subdued household sounds, till I forget the actual circumstances under which I am here, and fancy myself either a child at home again, in my dear mother's time, or that this is Pelham's house as I used in thought to regulate and arrange it for him when he was a baby, and I had him first in this very room. I don't believe that I have once since I came quite taken in the thought that I am here as the guest of John and Bride Thornley, the

children of that cousin who used to be spoken of at Pelham Court as the least reputable connection of our family."

"Mamma, did you know these very Thornleys in old times? I wish you would tell me all you remember ever to have heard about them."

"Their father had an old-fashioned manorhouse about twenty miles from Pelham Court. He was a very dissipated man, well-known as a horse-racer and gambler. My father and mother disliked him greatly, and we did not visit at his house; but we were all very sorry for his wife, a gentle, lady-like person, who lived a very solitary life shut up with her children, and seldom going anywhere. Once a year or so she would come, bringing one of her little ones with her, to spend a day at Pelham Court. It was evidently an effort for her to come into society, so neglected and unhappy had she become; but she made it for the sake of keeping up her connection with us, and the position in the county which was hers by right of birth. I quite well remember her dejected, worn face, like Bride's, but handsomer, and not so acute. The last time I saw her was when I stayed at Pelham Court, two years after my marriage; she came alone that day; but I remember her telling me, with tears in her eyes, an anecdote of her son John's devotion to her. It made an

impression on me, for Pelham was sitting on my knee at the time, a little child of a year old, and I thought it was such love as that I should like to grow up between him and me."

"Can you remember it?" asked Ellen, with eager curiosity.

"The circumstances are confused in my memory now; but I think the story was that the father had taken the child, without the mother's knowledge, to some place she disliked his visiting, and intended keeping him there through the night, leaving her in ignorance where he was; and that the boy escaped from the window of the room where he had been put to bed, and ran back through a dark winter's night a long distance home, to save her, as she said, some hours of agony. Poor woman! she died worn out with it at last."

"Then they must have suffered a great deal, that elder brother and sister. That is how they came to have such quiet, watchful, resolute faces. I am glad you have told me this story, mamma, it makes me understand them better. What was their old home like?"

"An old-fashioned ivy-grown place, with a moat round it. I rode past it with your father the day before I was married, and I remember being surprised that it did not strike him as so forlorn-looking and out of repair as I

thought it. I had not seen Castle Daly then. Your Uncle Charles bought the place some years after, when Mr. Thornley had to sell everything. He has improved the house, I believe, and means it for Marmaduke when he marries. It is strange, indeed, the odd turns of fortune and unexpected complications that time brings with it."

"Very strange," said Ellen, a little falteringly, for she knew that her mother's thoughts were contemplating the possibility of time bringing the strange turn of fortune's wheel that would place her in the Thornleys' old home as its mistress, while they were ruling in hers. She hastened to start another subject.

"Uncle Charles bought their old manorhouse, then. Did he lose sight of his cousins when they were turned out of it? Did not he do anything for them in their worst time?"

"It would have been useless to try to help them while their father lived. To have given or lent money to the elder Thornley would have been like pouring water into a sieve; and nothing would induce either Mrs. Thornley or the children to separate their fortunes from his during his life. They had offers of help from her relations and his on condition of giving him up, but they were determined to hold together. By the time the father died there was not much to be done for them. Bride and

John had worked their way up, and were doing well for themselves. It was more on our behalf than on his that Uncle Charles persuaded John Thornley to come here as your father's agent."

"They look like people who would always hold together, and stand by every person or thing that had a claim on them, or that they had ever taken up—steadfast—I think even Lesbia would be that, if she were once fixed."

"You think so?" Mrs. Daly asked, meditatively; and then, after the unusual burst of conversation a long silence followed. They had reached the borders of a topic that neither cared to enter upon, and that tempted each to drift off into reverie.

When tea was over, Mrs. Daly lay back on the sofa with her eyes shut, listening, as she said, to the stillness; and occasionally, when a door was opened below, catching the distant sound of Pelham's and Lesbia's voices in a duet to which Bride was playing the accompaniment on the piano in the drawing-room. Ellen sat on a stool looking into the glowing wood embers, and seeing there a vision of an old manorhouse, whose low-ceilinged, panelled rooms, as they opened out before her, were occupied by an incongruous succession of owners—Marmaduke and herself, Pelham and Lesbia, John and Bride. It rose up before her fancy as a rival home to Castle Daly,



invested with a fatal power of attraction that was destined to draw all the prosperity and habitableness from one family abode to the other,—an Aaron's serpent of a home, swallowing up other homes in revenge for having been left desolate so long. "They must love best the place where they were born," she said to herself; "and Uncle Charles would welcome them back there now they are prosperous. Why don't they go?" And with the question a heavier sense of obligation than she had acknowledged before fell upon her and saddened her.

The evening was nearly over when, on Mrs. Daly's retiring to rest, she ran down stairs to spend the last half-hour before prayer-time in the drawing-room. Everyone came forward to reproach her for having been absent so long on John's and Bride's last evening; but Ellen thought they all looked as if they had enjoyed themselves in her absence. Pelham apparently had not been *farouche*; for he and Lesbia were standing together by the piano chatting in the pauses of their songs, and there was a little flush on Lesbia's face, and the soft light in her brown eyes that became them best. Bride, with her fingers on the keys, playing mechanically what she was told to play and dreaming between whiles, was thinking that she should have John all to herself to-morrow. John, under cover of the music, had been indulging himself in a thoughtful

revisal of the essay on Young Ireland poetry, that was to go with him to London the next day, reclining comfortably in his arm-chair meanwhile, and only jotting down a memorandum for a note or altering the form of a sentence with his pencil, and now and then murmuring over a phrase half aloud to see if the sound satisfied his ear as well as the sense his judgment. He was well pleased as he read, and secretly thought that here was a piece of work well done—there was thought, and surely here and there pathos too, and sentences of keen sarcasm that in their wording more nearly realized his standard of expression than anything he had written before. He looked up at the bookshelf over his head, and nodded smilingly towards the copy of Elia's essays which had been his first purchase when he and Bride found themselves in a condition to begin to build up a library; and he said to himself that his past hours of devotional admiration of that master of delicate irony had not been quite thrown away, but might yet produce fruit that would prove the disciple not so far behind his model but that their kinship might be recognized. When Ellen came near, John resigned his chair and pencil into her hands, and begged her to read the essay and mark any passage she did not approve. Then he walked away to the other end of the room, and called Pelham to come and look over some

papers with him, and discuss matters of business that had to be attended to while he was away. Pelham grew perplexed, and after a time, somewhat annoyed, when he discovered that though Mr. Thornley folded and unfolded letters and talked fast, he was not by any means giving his whole attention to the questions they were considering, and that he invariably paused in the middle of a sentence if Ellen turned over a leaf of the MS. she held while he was speaking. When Pelham answered, his eyes became fixed on the pencil between Ellen's fingers, and he was clearly far more occupied in counting the number of marks she made on the edge of the page she was reading than in listening to what was said. There was nearly as much of the author's anxiety for appreciation as of the lover's in the absorption with which John watched Ellen's progress through his pages. He was not foolish enough to suppose that he could win her heart by any display of literary skill, but he thought there were outworks of admiration to be stormed that way; and he counted on having earned her gratitude by the ample justice he had rendered to the grace and originality he had found in some of Connor's verses. To atone for the critical mildness there displayed, he had fallen with double severity on the faults and exaggerations of the poems that had moved him to enthusiasm when he had heard Ellen's

voice thrill and tremble with their pathos. In treating these, he felt he was dealing with perilous matter that his conscience would not allow him to trifle with; and, almost unknown to himself, the words of that other poet aroused a strong antagonism—an impatient disapproval that coloured his judgment of his verse more than he was aware.

At last Ellen turned the final page, and John pushed aside the papers he had been arranging into a confused heap again, and hurried up to her chair. He almost trembled at the thought of the first look she would turn on him when she raised her eyes from the paper. The concluding sentences of his essay were to his mind full of deep sympathy with Ireland's sufferings, and of mournful, solemn warning to those who, while singing their country's wrongs, were preparing a still worse fate for her than she had yet endured; and he thought Ellen would be much moved in reading what he had written. He recollected the wet sheet of the newspaper when one pathetic poem had received such a tribute as would, he thought, have satisfied the most exacting poet's thirst for acknowledgment. Would there be tears in those dearest eyes in the world now?

"Well," he said, standing opposite her, "how do you like it?"

The eyes she raised to his face were swimming in tears, but it was an angry light that flashed through them.

"Like it! How could you think I should like it! Why, I hate it all—I hate every word."

The excess of his surprise and disappointment calmed him at once and made him frigid.

"I am sorry, but I was of course obliged to write what I believe to be true. Why do you hate it?"

"It is cruel—you ought to know that. The praise is what I hate; it is all double-edged, a great deal crueller than the blame. You talk about imagination, and magic, and glamour, and the force of eloquent words, as if the poems were all made up out of these, and there were no patriotism, no wrongs, no real country even—nothing real at the bottom for the enthusiasm to be about. If you had said this out plainly in words that did not profess to praise, I should have been angry, but I should not have hated it quite so much."

"You are like all women, who never quite understand or appreciate irony."

"I do understand it; I hate it worst of anything in the world. It is like a blight that creeps in and kills everything it touches. Yes, and it withers the strength of its wielders as well as that of those it wounds."

"It kills unrealities and false enthusiasms, nothing stronger."

"True enthusiasms sometimes have weak beginnings, and when irony kills *them*——"

"Well?"

"It is the worst sort of murder; there is no end to the evil of it, for you can never say what base or terrible things may not spring up from their ashes. When all the high feeling and hope has been laughed out of them, they die; but out of their ashes monsters of cruelty and hate rise up."

"How do you know?" asked Bride, who had come up behind John, and for the last minute or two had been looking at the agitated faces of the disputants with a sensible smile on her lips. "Don't you think, Miss Daly, that you are giving John fresh evidence of the truth of his remarks concerning the creative power of Irish eloquence, when you frighten us out of all wish to go to bed to-night by such Cassandra prophecies? John is slowly turning to stone under the effect of your denunciations, and is already, as you may perceive, quite incapable of holding his bedroom candle straight."

"Of course you laugh at me," said Ellen, rising and laying down the manuscript sheets on a table near. "I will go to bed. It is waste of words for

me to speak when you can sneer at D'Arcy O'Donnell's poems."

"I don't sneer," said John, coming close to her, and speaking emphatically. "Sneers imply contempt, and there is not a grain of contempt in the whole paper; it is you who *will* read it wrong. It is respectful throughout, for I have put out all my powers, and I praise all I can conscientiously."

"You put yourself on a height and judge."

"Critics always must."

"Then they are always wrong."

"Perhaps; but you will at least allow that I have done justice to Connor."

"You have praised his rhymes; but, fond of such praise as Connor is, he will hate it, when it is given at the expense of all he believes in and cares for, as heartily as I hate it for him. I would not advise you to trust that manuscript in his hands if he were here to night."

"If you would show me where you think I am unjust, instead of condemning the whole," said John, deprecatingly, "I am not beyond conviction; and though you may not believe it, I have a sincere wish to speak the truth. If you would specify——"

"I can't," answered Ellen. "You would call it all exaggeration; it would be, just as your sister says, giving

you fresh evidence to turn against us. Give me my candle and let me go. I don't think I will ever tell you what I really think again about anything I care for. I'll know now how you will take it."

John turned away abruptly, took a bedroom candle from a table, and lit it slowly; then, as he placed it in Ellen's hand, he said, in a low voice that could only reach her ear—

"What you said last was too bad. You talk of other people being cruel; but that was a great deal worse than cruelty—it was revenge. You must have known how it would hurt me."

"Good-night!" said Ellen, aloud. "I am sorry if I am cross, but I can't help it; good-night, Miss Thornley—I know you are wishing me away, for you said you still had a great deal to do to-night, and Lesbia has disappeared long since."

Bride turned to her brother, as the door closed behind Ellen—

" ' Like oaks and towers they had a giant grace,  
Those western shepherd seers, ' "

she quoted, laughing. "Such an exhibition does make one feel one's own moderate size, mental and bodily, does it not? I *quite* believe now in the O'Flaherty ancestress, who frightened the Saxons into paying tribute; but, my



dear John, I beg your pardon for laughing, I see you are really—annoyed——”

“Annoyed is not the word—it goes a great deal deeper than that.”

“I am sorry, but really—her opinion is worthless—utterly worthless on such a matter as this. You could not expect a half-educated girl (don’t wince at the phrase, John, you know she is half-educated in our sense of the word) to appreciate such writing as yours. It is quite beyond her. Now, that is really the best piece of criticism you have ever written.”

“Criticism is a horrid trade. She was right in saying that it withers up the craftsmen as well as their victims. We have stultified ourselves over it—you and I, Bride. In our horror of sentiment we have toppled over on the other side, and grown as false as that which we wished to avoid.”

“It is only our crust, and people whose liking is worth having will make their way through it, and find us out.”

“It is a desperate hope, though, when the liking is a matter of life and death; and there are people with no crust. Does anyone about here know, I wonder, what sort of person this Young Ireland poet—this O’Donnell—is? Not that it is any concern of mine. The important question to me is, are my criticisms unjust?”

"I won't have you consider. You have always given me a right over your compositions since the first you brought to me, and I have given my *imprimatur* to this. Let me take it away and pack it up before you spoil it."

"No, no, leave it where it is."

"But you won't meddle with it to-night in the mood you are in?"

"No, I will take a night to think it over; but leave it on my writing-table. I will not touch it till to-morrow morning, and then not, unless I find there is good reason."

"Of course you'll spoil it; but I see you must be left to take your way;"—then, as he turned to get her candle, she came up behind him, and put both her hands on his shoulders. "John, there's just a word more to be said: however impervious our crust may be to other people, between us two it can never be a disguise. No possible armour of cynicism you could put on would ever hide the real *you* from *me*. I know well enough that my liking is not a matter of life and death; but whatever you want from it, it is always there, and will not, I think, fail you."

"Thank you: I have been wishing to thank you for a long time, only I did not know how to get out the words, for being so kind to *her*, and for making this week what I believe I shall be glad of all my life, even if, as is most likely, I never have another like it."

“You will have enough of such to tire out my good behaviour, and force me against my will to own that ‘oaks and towers,’ and ‘giant graces,’ and enthusiasms, are not as much to my taste as more commonplace materials, which, to my mind, wash and wear better. Do you remember my telling you that it was as well for me to keep a certain possibility concerning you in my mind, that I might be able to bear it when it came, and your saying you could not see what there would be to bear?”

“And I don’t now. I should have thought that such companionship as we have had lately would have been the greatest delight to you—would have made you perfectly happy.”

“Yes, and you would think the same if I talked to you till morning. You are only a man after all, and must not affect to see through my crust as clearly as I see through yours. Good-night; I shall go and finish my packing.”

It was very late before Bride Thornley came near the end of her business. The perfect ordering of the household, which gave such content to Mrs. Daly, was not effected without much labour on the part of its head; and at this juncture there was also to be taken into account arrangements for the distribution of food among the villagers, which could not be given over into less systematic hands

than her own without much forethought. A little before twelve o'clock, Bride issued from her room with a bundle of memorandums and papers which she designed to arrange in the pigeon-hole compartments of a desk in the housekeeper's room, where Lesbia would find them when needed. She was not altogether sorry to have an excuse for coming out, like a sultan in disguise, at unseasonable hours, that she might satisfy herself of the obedience of her subjects on certain points concerning which she had long been doubtful; and when on reaching the head of the staircase she heard a stealthy tread of feet, and saw through the balusters a glimmer of lights moving in regions far below, it was not fear, but a sense of triumph that came into her mind. Now at last she should convict the offenders of the often-denied offence of sitting up in the lower regions to unauthorized late hours. She hurried down three flights of stairs, but only to find total darkness and silence in the offices she invaded. On her return, as she was pushing open a heavy swing-door that led into the front hall, she again caught sight of a suspicious gleam, which now seemed to come through the chinks of the drawing-room door. In her surprise, she let the swing-door fall to in her face, and dropped the papers she was carrying; and when she had gathered them up again, and come through into the hall at last, she was much startled to find herself face to

face with Ellen Daly, fully dressed, and standing close to the door, with an extinguished candle in her hand.

"Is anything the matter? Is your mother ill?" Bride asked anxiously, as soon as she recovered her start.

"Oh, no, thank you! I wanted something, and came down to fetch it, and just now my candle went out. Will you light me back to my room? I am afraid of making a noise and awakening mamma."

"It seems to me there has been a great deal of noise in the house this hour past—have you observed anything?"

"I dare say there has. I have not been thinking about it till now."

"I shall go and call John."

"I advise you not: this house is famous for noises, and no good has ever come of hunting them that I ever heard. There are several Dalys that walk, you know, to say nothing of banshees, and the only thing to be done is to grow accustomed to them, and let them have their way."

"You really believe that?" cried Bride, unable to suppress a slight movement of contempt, as she noticed a peculiar intent look in Ellen's eyes, and a quiver in her voice, showing that tears were not far off. "No wonder the servants think they can roam about as they please at night under cover of ghost stories."

"I confess to having felt uncomfortable when my light

went out," said Ellen, meekly, "and that I shall be glad to keep near you till we get back to our bedrooms."

"I am going in here first, to put some papers into the press, and then I shall listen again at the head of the kitchen stairs. Come with me, if you like."

The sound of living voices, or Bride's scepticism, had clearly driven the ghosts away, for all was perfectly still and dark when she and Ellen returned from the house-keeper's room, and stood in the hall looking upwards and downwards. Bride wished to search the lower rooms, but Ellen professed great anxiety to return to her mother, and she did not like to detain her. She was half-disposed to set forth on a new voyage of discovery when they parted company at Mrs. Daly's door; but on looking into her own room she found Lesbia awake, and anxious to know the cause of her absence; and, rather than excite nervous fears in her, she decided to put aside her own curiosity and betake herself to bed.

It was not with an easy mind, however, that she did so. Several times after she had laid her head on the pillow, she started up again, fancying a sound, and when after many efforts she was at length sinking blissfully down into an abyss of sleep, she was brought back wide awake and distressingly alert again, by the recollection flashing into her mind that the candle in Ellen Daly's hand was covered

by an extinguisher, and certainly could not have been blown out by accident as her words implied. What could she have come down stairs so late to seek? And what could have induced her to leave herself designedly in the dark? Bride felt she should have no peace of mind till she had fathomed these mysteries, and the night looked an uncomfortably long space for miserable suspicions to work out their torments in. Nothing but sleep could shorten it, and for a long time that relief seemed quite unattainable. If there should be such a serious blemish as want of truth and straightforwardness in her brother's idol, then indeed the sight of his infatuation would be hard to bear. And she could not till morning dawned decide whether the misery of seeing him continue in delusion, or the misery of having to act herself as the shatterer of his dreams, would be the most acute.

After wishing Miss Thornley good-night, Ellen stood holding the door of her room ajar, and watched through the crevice till Bride and her light finally disappeared; then she emerged again, and ran quickly down stairs, not pausing until she reached the drawing-room door. It was not so dark as it had been half-an-hour before, for the moon had now risen high enough to shine through the high windows and cross the wide dark staircase with bars of cold white light. Neither was it quite dark within the

drawing-room, when, after listening for a second or two, she turned the handle and entered, for dusty streams of moonlight came through holes in the shutters, and made green patches of light here and there on the floor, showing clearly two occupants, one of whom was stooping over a writing-desk, as if intently occupied thereat; the other standing upright in the middle of the room, with his arms folded, and the moonlight falling full on his face. At the slight sound Ellen made in coming forward the stooping figure sprang up, and Connor hurried to meet her.

"Well, you plucky conspirator—you girl of gold!" he cried; "have you got us the key?"

"Yes; but oh, Connor, this last freak of yours has almost killed me with the fright. Who do you think it was that made the noise with the green-baize door, that frightened you into extinguishing my candle?"

"The Daly that killed his twin-brother in a duel, or the one that walks about with his head under his arm—which?"

"It was Bride Thornley; and if I had not gone boldly to meet the noise, she would have marched straight in here, and found us together."

"Well, she would not have been the only member of her family I should have had the honour of showing to our cousin to-night."



"She did me good service, as it was, for she took me to the housekeeper's room herself, and I lifted the key of the conservatory door from its hook in the press over her very head while she was arranging her papers ; but oh, the terror I was in till I saw her safe up stairs again."

"You used not to be so timid; it would have been nothing but fun to you a while ago to outwit the dragons that have driven us into exile. Anyway, Eileen aroon, you would not grudge D'Arcy his one visit to the Castle, if you had seen, as I have done to-night, how he loves every stone of it without ever having set his eyes on one of them before. There's no one has a better right to be here than he."

Ellen turned to Connor's companion, who had now moved to the door, and was standing near them.

"If we could have welcomed you properly, you know I should have been glad to see you here, cousin," she said.

"But you don't know how bitterly ashamed I am of intruding on you in such a fashion as this," he answered. "When I found our retreat was cut off, I wanted to call the master of the house, and confess the scrape we had got ourselves into; but you appeared at the door of your room while we were discussing the point, and before I knew, Connor gave the signal that brought you up to our rescue."

"Connor was right; it would not have done to rouse the house: mamma might have been disturbed and made terribly anxious by Connor's unexpected appearance."

"I ought not to have let him persuade me to this freak, the wind-up of our enterprise here. I can only plead in excuse the longing that grew up through my childhood, when my mother used to talk to me in America of Castle Daly as if it were the very heart of Ireland, so that I could hardly feel myself pledged to the country as a son till I had been here and asserted my birthright."

Connor and Ellen had spoken hurriedly, in low whispers; but D'Arcy, during this speech, allowed his voice to rise to its ordinary key, and showed no more haste or embarrassment than if he had been conversing under ordinary circumstances in full daylight. Ellen looked up into his face, distinctly outlined, but pale and weird-looking in the moonlight, and a thrill almost of awe passed through her. The likeness to her father was so strong, that she could not help remembering stories, that had frightened her in her childhood, of departed Dalys who came back in the dead of night to throng the old rooms, and she felt tongue-tied, as if to speak would break a spell and banish the presence so often longed for.

Connor put his hand on his cousin's shoulder with a whispered "Hush!"

"He is not the right stuff for a conspirator to be made of," he said, turning to Ellen. "He would get up on to the wall his friends were hid behind, and make a fine speech to the constables who were looking for them. The trouble I have to keep him quiet!"

"When you have brought me into false positions, you mean. Never will I trust myself in your guidance again. The bargain was that I was to be taken through a suite of uninhabited rooms to see a certain picture, and get back without encountering a soul, and here we are caught in a trap like burglars."

"I knew, at the worst, there was a faithful mouse in the Castle with wits enough to set the lion free if he did get into trouble," said Connor; "and I would not have wanted help if the place had not been destroyed altogether with repairs and improvements."

"But I warned you, and told you not to come."

"If we had had any doubt of there being one to welcome us, we should have lost it listening to some words we overheard while we were waiting to slip in. Did not I like what you said to John Thornley about how I would thank him for his contemptible praise of me, if I had the chance of doing what I liked with his precious essay!"

"Why, where were you?"

"On the ledge of the lowest turret window, among the

ivy, where we used to sit in old times and overhear conversations in the drawing-room, when the window chanced to be open. I had to hold D'Arcy fast, I can tell you, or he would have flung himself down and come striding through the drawing-room window to clap you on the back for standing up for us."

"He is mistaken, Miss Daly; I would not have moved, or lost a syllable for the world. If it has been much to me to come here and see the place where my mother's thoughts were till she died, it is even more to know that there is a voice in the old home that speaks up for me. It was a moment never to be forgotten."

"And you saw her picture?"

"Yes," said Connor, answering for his friend. "When all was still in the house, I let him in by the turret door, and took him up the creaking old turret stairs to the lumber-rooms, and then across the passage to our old schoolroom. He stayed mourning over the picture a thought too long, for when we got back to the passage we found the door into the lumber-rooms locked and the key gone."

"Miss Thornley must have come up to lock it before going to bed."

"No; better fun than that, it was little Lesbia herself. We stood in the dark at the end of the passage, and saw

her tripping down stairs with the key in her hand. It was too provoking ! I could see the top of her pretty head for two minutes and a half, by peeping over the balusters ; it was my turn then to want to fling myself over and fall at her feet. Would she have taken me for a ghost and screamed, I wonder ! ”

“ Her head is much fuller of robbers than of ghosts, and that is why she makes a point of having the door to the lumber-rooms locked at night. I think you must have made more noise than you are aware of, for mamma was restless. I sat with her an hour, and was only just going to my own room when you saw me.”

“ By good luck, or we should have had to spend the night in the old schoolroom, and missed the car that is to meet us at Ballyowen. We are both due in Dublin by midday to-morrow. You may take comfort by knowing that this is the very last you’ll see of me for some time to come.”

“ After this experience I shall never know when or where you may turn up. I shall never think you safe. Cousin D’Arcy, must you lead him into all this ? ”

“ Ellen ! what do you mean ? Have I not been enough insulted to-night by John Thornley’s praise, without your insinuating that I am a led dog, to be turned this way and that at D’Arcy’s will ? ”

Heedless of Connor's interruption, Ellen could look up into the deeply-shadowed face, that in the light looked so familiar and yet so strange. "Mr. says," she went on, "that it is what will alter and whole life, and he is so thoughtless and young, father is dead. It is a terrible weight on my conscience hiding all this, not knowing quite whether it is or only a desperate thing you are doing."

She could see how the countenance she looked upon had changed; there was a moment's pause, and she was struggling for voice to speak.

"Yes," he said hoarsely at last, "you are right—concealment, the dark ways, the poor mean beginning *terrible*; but it is the path that has to be crept or trodden through at the outset of every uprising. I can't say that we shall ever get further than that. I can't say we shall not be trodden down into the earth we are passing through like worms, before we ever come up into the daylight of the struggle. It may be simply a sacrifice of our lives and nothing more; and you have asked me to spare your brother. What can I say?—from the beginning to the end, whatever it is, there shall always be one life, one future, one reputation, to go first—before his, and be thrust always between blame or danger; that I can promise you."

"That was not what I wanted ; but thank you," said Ellen, mournfully.

"Come, now," interrupted Connor, "you two have talked sentiment long enough for to-night. If we are to catch the car we must start at once, and if we don't intend to do that, we had better have stayed the night in the old school-room up stairs, where I could have written love-letters by the yard for Lesbia to find in the morning. They would have put her out of conceit with Pelham's singing, I fancy. It's too bad his having that pull over me, and I obliged to sit mum up in the ivy like an old owl, and hear it all going on."

"Yes, indeed, I think you had better go now," Ellen answered. "Miss Thornley must be asleep by this time, and the conservatory door leading out on the terrace can be opened and shut with very little noise. This way ; I will turn the key after you, and put up the bars, so that there shall be no trace in the morning of anyone's having gone through ; but I hope you will never put my sisterly devotion to such a proof again, Connor."

"It shall be for some more important purpose, if ever he does, I promise you," said D'Arcy, as they passed through the conservatory.

"And I," said Connor, putting his hands on Ellen's shoulders, and stooping down to give her a parting kiss at

the door, "promise you that when you come to think it over, you will have to confess that even this game has been well worth its little candle ; and that your brother Connor is the boy with the quick wit to steal a march on the enemy, and give him a telling thrust when occasion offers. If John Thornley complains, don't scruple to tell him, as a message from me, that Cassandra was right, and that the little minnows don't care to be told they are bigger people than the whales, but resent such fibs as insults to their understanding."

Ellen stood still, watching the two receding figures, their shadows stretching across the moonlit lawn till they had passed the garden gate and disappeared down the road ; and then she could not resist the temptation of stepping herself across the threshold into the garden to breathe the fresh night air, fragrant with flower-scents, and looking up at the windows of the silent house, shaded for sleep as still as if it were death. If she had dared, she would have liked to stay outside and wait for the summer sunrise, now not far off. The stealthy retreat into the house, and then the solitary hours of self-questioning, when the excitement had passed and she had betaken herself to the position of the silent sleepers overhead, looked extremely distasteful, but it had to be gone through. She left the key on the hall table, reflecting that she must



trust to the servants' general reputation for carelessness and to the pre-occupation of a morning before a journey, to escape any rigorous investigation as to the reason of its being there, and then she crept up to her own room. She had far less hope than Bride of being able to shorten the hours by sleep, for *her* uncomfortable reflections included some self-reproach and much self-questioning. She had always made herself the slave of Connor's schemes from earliest childhood, when the discrepancy between their father's and their mother's views on education created a large uncertain margin between permissible and unpermissible pleasures, concerning which a certain amount of contrivance seemed only necessary to avoid disagreeable collisions between the ruling powers.

It was an old, old habit to shield Connor, and further his undertakings, however wild ; but was it right, was it not leading now to more serious consequences than she had ever contemplated ? The warning sentences at the end of John Thornley's essay came back to her memory in all their terrible force of plain reasoning and strong, sober sense. If he should be right and Young Ireland wrong ? For a cause that was certainly good, she thought she could even bear to see her brother throw away his life, if it were necessary—sure that such throwing away was worthy, and would not fail of its reward in the far end ; but for a

mistaken hope, for a result that would not be good if it were attained—that was the misery—to stand in the dark and choose as she felt these young men, Connor's leaders, were doing. Was it heroic, or was it only rash?

Maddened with the misery they saw around them, was it only a weak impatience that made them clutch at desperate remedies, or was it the divine instinct that, in a nation's darkest hours, draws its true sons together, and inspires them with that breath of new life which, blowing over dry bones picked bare by oppressors, and breathing through hearts turned to dust of despair, raises up from them a mighty army of strong men standing on their feet. As the light of a new day crept into the room, Ellen rose from her bed and sat at her window with a weary, aching pain at her heart, which the solemn beauty of the sunrise on the hills could not soothe away. That joyous sunlight would, she knew, illumine many a death-bed of starving men and women and children, before it faded in the red west. She longed for some friend whom she could consult in her present perplexities, without knowing beforehand that he or she had prejudged all the questions that troubled her. Most deeply she regretted that old habits of reserve, and the unexpressed but always felt division of interest in the family, made her mother more utterly out of reach as a helper and confidant than any stranger. She

knew that if she were to confess her anxieties about Connor to her mother, it would not be welcomed as a mark of confidence, but regarded as a cruel attempt to lay fresh burdens on shoulders already sinking under their load. The first effort of the day must be to put away all trace of the night's agitation, and bring a cheerful countenance to her mother's bedside on her awakening.

### CHAPTER XIII.

“The hope I dreamed of was a dream—  
Was but a dream ; and now I wake  
Exceeding comfortless and worn and old,  
For a dream's sake,

“Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart ;  
My silent heart lie still and break :  
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed  
For a dream's sake.”

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

BRIDE THORNLEY did not feel called on to make any effort to assume cheerfulness. Her morning face, when she looked into the inner room where Lesbia slept, showed such traces of hersleepless night, and was so lined with grave concern, that the sensitive conscience of that timid little personage awoke to a flutter of misgivings. Had she of late been treating this best of sisters with the openness that was justly her due ? Could any circumstance have come to Bride's knowledge that rendered her suspicious of reserves on her part ?

Yet should Bride be going to insist on complete confidence between them, where should she begin her confessions? Which end of the tangle of conflicting wishes and feelings, which she blamed herself for concealing, should she unravel first before her sister's clear-judging eyes? When Bride came near to bestow her morning kiss, Lesbia let fall the weight of hair she had just gathered into her hands, and threw both arms round her sister's neck, looking at her with the humble, deprecating entreaty in her eyes, that had at times won concessions even from experienced Mrs. Joseph Maynard.

"Bride, you are angry with some one, but it is never me!" she exclaimed. "You are not thinking of going away, and leaving me in anger, for any little thing I may have done to vex you."

"My darling, no!" said Bride, stroking back the dark hair, and bestowing a shower of kisses on the smooth forehead and peach-bloom cheeks; "if it was any doubt about you, or anger against you, that made me unhappy, do you think I should have waited to speak about it till you asked me? No, the one thing that gives me comfort in every trouble that arises, is the certainty that there is clear daylight of understanding between us—that whoever else may have mysteries or concealments, there is never a shade of want of confidence between John and you and me."

"But, Bride," whispered Lesbia, and then the little upturned face, after suddenly becoming one vivid blush, buried itself on Bride's shoulder, and was lost altogether among the tumbled avalanche of hair that fell over it.

"My dear," said Bride, after waiting patiently some seconds for its reappearance, "is it not quite time for you to finish dressing? I heard John go down stairs some time ago, and I want very much to speak alone with him before breakfast; so, unless you have really something important to say to me——"

"Oh no, no—only nonsense," cried Lesbia, peeping up.

"Then I think, dear, nonsense had better wait till another time, or I shall lose my only chance of a private talk with John before we set out."

Bride had heard her brother enter the drawing-room, and, after remaining there some minutes, retire to his own study, and she was anxious to secure his attention before he became absorbed in looking over his essay. She had a feeling, though she did not like to put it into words even to herself, that the communication she was about to make to him ought to weigh against any intention to soften his essay he might have arrived at in his night musings.

She found him already standing before his writing-desk, but not writing. His hands were crossed behind his back, and he was staring down gloomily on some papers that lay

on a portfolio before him. As soon as she entered, he called to her to come and join him.

"Whose handwriting should you say that was?" he asked in a low, eager voice, pointing to a sheet of paper, with a few words scrawled in large letters on it, that lay uppermost. She raised it to examine it closely, but instead of reading, exclaimed in dismay, at the sight of several torn sheets of paper that lay below,—

"My dear John, is that your essay?—surely you have not torn it up without my leave."

"I wish I had; I wish it was my own doing, then no more need be said. The perplexity is that I found my MS. in the state you see when I went into the drawing-room to fetch it away ten minutes ago. The first sheet is the only one untorn; it lay over the shreds, and has a sentence scrawled on it—read."

Bride looked down on the paper in her hand, and with difficulty, for the writing was in faint pencil, made out the words, "Cassandra was right; irony is an exasperating weapon; it will arouse the meanest of the mice to rally round their lions, and set them free to ravage."

"What can it mean?" she asked, puzzled.

"You called Ellen Daly 'Cassandra' last night. The person who wrote those lines must have overheard our conversation; the question is, which of the servants in the

house would have understood it, and cared enough to take so daring a method of showing partizanship. There was opportunity enough since last night for anyone of them to have done it."

"Yes," said Bride thoughtfully; "for anyone in the house to have done it."

"Any of the servants, you mean?"

"My dear John," said Bride, slowly, fixing her eyes sorrowfully on his face, "do you think there is any one in the house besides ourselves and our guests who could spell such a word as Cassandra rightly, or remember it and apply it, if heard once?"

"That," said John quickly, "reduces us to the supposition that the house has been entered during the night by some one who knows all our family ways. It is an uncomfortable idea. I shall hardly like to leave the place to-day."

"Nor I, with Lesbia in it. John, without knowing anything of this accident, I came to you to suggest that you had better start for London alone to-day; I remaining behind to look after Lesbia."

"But why? you say you knew nothing of this. For Heaven's sake don't be mysterious, Bride! You know of all things in the world I hate inuendoes."

"Not more, I hope, than I hate all mysterious and



underhand doings. If you wish me to speak plainly you must give me time. I must think for a moment, and try to disentangle impressions from facts, so as to avoid saying unnecessarily what will pain you."

"Well," said John, when he had watched Bride for about a minute absently twisting the sheet of paper she still held into a neat cornucopia, "you had better begin at once; there is no need for such extreme caution. When you talk of giving me pain, I know, of course, whom your communication concerns, and, to save your scruples, I may as well tell you at once that if it is anything against *her* I am not going to believe it."

"I am sorry for you though, John, for it is not a conjecture of mine you have to hear. I shall merely tell you a little fact; and I am afraid you won't like it."

"Don't be afraid, I shall not care. I put the fact of her trustworthiness above any other you can tell me."

"I will simply state what I saw. I sat up last night writing, and when I had finished my business I left my room to replace the account-books I had been using in the press in the housekeeper's room. I heard steps in the passage as I was coming down stairs, and fancied I saw a light moving below. Thinking that some of the servants were up late, I went to the offices first, and found all dark there. On my way back I saw the light again streaming

through the crevices of the drawing-room door. Unluckily I dropped my books with some noise, and when I had picked them up again the light was gone; but, coming from the direction of the drawing-room, I met Ellen Daly with a candle in her hand extinguished."

"You spoke to her, I suppose, and learned how she chanced to be there?"

"She said she had come down to look for a book, I think, and that her candle had gone out; and when I questioned her about the lights and the noise, she talked of ghosts. I am sorry to say it, John, but I saw she wished to prevent my going into the drawing-room."

"Bride, I cannot have you believe that she went there to destroy my manuscript."

"If you like I will not say so; I promised to tell the fact and leave you to draw what inference you pleased."

"It's absurd. She would have torn the papers across before my face if she had meant to do it. You know she would."

"No, John, I don't. There is a great deal of sensitive-ness and timidity oddly mixed up with her rashness. It's Irish. I notice the same thing about all the people here. They will be wildly defiant at one minute and the next, when the excitement is over, they will use the subtlest stratagems to hide their revenge."

"I thought you were not going to give your opinions."

"You force me to argue, and I want to show you that I can believe she has done this thing and yet not condemn her entirely. You heard how vehemently she spoke last night. She said she hated every word of the essay, and refused to make suggestions. I can't help thinking the secret destruction of what she hated a natural result with her of the over-excitement."

John's face flushed painfully; he turned his back on Bride, took a turn in the room and came back to her.

"No," he said, "she did not do it: a guest in our house and behaving to us all this last week in such frank sweet friendly fashion, that even against sober conviction I could not help at times believing in the possibility of pleasing her—she could not have dealt me such a blow in the dark. Bride, I should be less dissatisfied with you if you showed more surprise."

"I can be as indignant as you please at the insult to you."

"My complaint is that you so quietly take it for granted that *she* did it."

"Well, then, I will confess that I have been cherishing more serious suspicions still, and that it is almost a relief to connect Miss Daly's mysterious behaviour last night with the destruction of your essay. I have been fancying

that she was perhaps carrying on some secret system of communication with her foolish brother and that rebel friend of his, who appears to have such a hold on her imagination, and with whom I suspect she is in love. I had made up my mind not to leave Lesbia alone in such an unwholesome atmosphere of intrigue."

"You will call it infatuation, but I must say that the notion of your thinking it necessary to guard Lesbia's truthfulness lest it should be contaminated by Ellen Daly is simply amazing to me."

"We won't drift into a discussion of their respective characters; the breakfast-bell will ring in a minute, and we have to decide what to do. Of course I am ready to go or stay, as you please; but I confess I shall not have a happy hour apart from Lesbia if I leave her under these circumstances."

"But if you stay here, the Dalys can hardly prolong their visit. They will go back to Eagle's Edge, and to all the difficulties and privations I thought I had helped them out of for a time. The thought will bring me back from London before I have half finished my work there."

"You would come back to look after her? My dear John, that is devotion, and for what? She will never even thank you. She will just march over all your safeguards and precautions straight to her rebel Irish poet.

and to a disastrous fate of one kind or another. She has it in her."

"Who is Cassandra now? But prophesy as you like, at the bottom of your heart, you know nothing you say will make any difference to me."

"If you have resolved to set yourself up as a windmill for all Young Ireland to tilt against, I think it very likely you will do it, and that I shall have to stand aside and see. But there is the bell. What are we to do?"

"Let us leave our plans to be settled by the chapter of accidents. Some unexpected explanation may come out that will make you ashamed of your suspicions."

"Then you must allow me to mention my midnight expedition and the fate of your essay at breakfast. It will give me the opportunity of making observations."

"Of course you will not hint at suspicions?"

"Would you rather do it yourself?"

"No, no; if anything is to be said you must say it. I should feel all the time that I was laying a trap for the most ingenuous person in the world, and I should betray how sneaky I felt."

"I shall not feel the least sneaky. I merely give her the opportunity of explaining, and I hope most heartily that she will clear herself."

The party at breakfast was an unusually silent one, and

Bride did not find the task of introducing the subject of the night's adventures so easy as she had expected. A dead weight of expectation seemed to brood over every one, and she cleared her throat once or twice before she felt able to launch her thunderbolt in the heavy air. Pelham was the only person present who looked unconcerned, and ate his breakfast as usual, and she knew by experience what a very weak conversational reed he was to depend on.

He received her first remark that she had passed a disturbed night and been alarmed by unaccountable noises in the house, with an unconcerned "Did you, indeed?" and Bride, whose ears were still tingling with the shaky, peculiar sound her own voice had had in speaking, looked imploringly across the table towards John, in the hope that he would put in a word to help her. He carefully avoided her eye, and the dead silence that followed was broken at last by Ellen's saying, quickly and nervously,

"The noises don't affect us much, you see. We are used to be rather proud of our ghosts. Only Pelham does not believe in them."

Bride was sufficiently provoked to long to throw back into John's teeth his late words, "The most ingenuous person in the world." All her caution and politeness could not restrain her from casting an indignant look on

Ellen, and allowing her voice to rise to a tone of displeasure as she continued—

“I should be glad enough to accustom myself to your theory of ghosts, and would compound for any amount of noise, if our midnight visitors were satisfied with walking through the rooms, leaving things there as they find them. They did not behave themselves so inoffensively last night.”

“Do you mean to say that the house has been robbed?” cried Pelham, interested at last. “I should not have thought it possible. Housebreaking, except for the sake of getting arms, has hitherto been an unknown crime in these parts. I hope you have not lost anything of value.”

“Nothing has been stolen,” said Bride, slowly; “but a very serious injury has been inflicted on my brother. A manuscript that he left on the drawing-room table last night was found this morning torn into shreds; and, as if to show that it had not been done by accident, a mysterious message was scribbled on the outer sheet, the only one left untorn. We both feel anxious to trace this strange act to its author, and shall be thankful to any one who can give us a clue to better understanding it.”

“Speak for yourself, Bride,” interrupted John, hastily; “I am not at all sure that I wish for further light, or that I think the subject worth investigation.”

During the latter part of Bride's speech he had raised his eyes anxiously to Ellen's face, and the rapid changes there, the deep flush, and then the ebbing away of colour to extreme pallor, were so many blows struck at his heart. His own face grew as agitated as hers, and Lesbia, looking from one to the other, cried out in dismay,

"How frightened you all do look, to be sure ! Is it very alarming ? Might we all have been murdered in our beds last night ? Are things beginning to be here as they were in the French Revolution, when the *chauffeurs* did such dreadful things, do you suppose ?"

"Don't excite yourself, Lesbia, pray," said John, sharply ; "there is nothing whatever for you to trouble yourself about."

"But, John, you are as pale as death yourself ; and you can't think how frightened of robbers I am since Bride made me read about the *chauffeurs*."

"Bride had better intermit her doses of history, if they suggest nothing better to you than ridiculous fears."

"Not so very ridiculous," said Pelham, firing up. "Surely such a strange occurrence in the middle of the night is sufficient ground for some alarm ? I hope you don't mean to pass it over without inquiry. Miss Thornley asked for a clue. I don't know that this is worth much, but I remember having an impression in the



night that I heard steps on the terrace, and when I looked out of my window, just about sunrise, I saw Murdock Malachy leaning against the post of the side gate. I wondered at the time how he came to be there at that hour. I have observed him several times lately hanging about the place in a suspicious way. He should be questioned."

"No, Pelham," said Ellen, impetuously, "don't accuse him. He has nothing whatever to do with this, I can answer for it. Don't let us bring him into our quarrels again. He had the worst of it long ago."

"I bear no malice against him for long ago, I assure you, Ellen," said Pelham, gravely; "I merely mentioned what I have observed. This is no quarrel of ours either, as I understand it."

"And," said John Thornley, leaning forward in his chair and trying to catch Ellen's eye, while his face flushed and softened into an expression of earnest kindness, "let us put the word quarrel quite away from this matter, whoever is concerned in it. The essay was doomed to destruction last night when you pronounced it unjust; the person who destroyed it only anticipated my own intentions. If it was meant for a lesson or a warning, I am content to take it, however much I may wish it had been given more directly."

Ellen rose from her seat while John was speaking. "I am going up stairs to mamma," she said, quickly, and then turning to Bride, she added, "You are not intending to leave the house quite immediately, I hope. I shall want to speak alone with you after I have seen mamma"

"She has all but owned it," said Bride to John when the rest of the party had dispersed, and they were again alone. "No, don't look as if you thought I was triumphing over you; it is not that indeed. I am more sorry for her than you would believe; and when you are out of the way, and I have her to myself, I believe I shall get into perfect charity with her again, in spite of everything."

"You are determined to remain here and let me go to London alone?"

"I am afraid I must. Did you see how poor little Lesbia started and changed colour when Pelham mentioned Murdock Malachy's mysterious haunting of the house, which, by the way, had not escaped me? The silly little thing has let herself be drawn into sharing some secret, and must not be left to guide herself through its consequences. I shall stay with her till you can have us both in London with you. Please let that be soon. You can invite the Dalys to spend the whole summer at the Castle when we are out of it."

"I should not like to see their faces when I gave the invitation, though. Bride, you should recollect our horror of patronage, and take into consideration the added bitterness that the sudden reversal of our positions towards each other must give to offers of help from us. I don't see how they could bear to live in Lesbia's house without some plausible reason being invented to induce them to do it. I thought I had succeeded in providing such an ingenious one; and this miserable business baffles me. Ah, there was a great deal destroyed last night in the tearing up of those sheets, besides my poor criticisms."

"I wish my interview with Miss Daly were well over. I do not look forward to it."

"Do you suppose she is going to confide it all to you?"

"Some little part, perhaps—not all; but let me have her to myself. See, she has left her mother's room, and joined Pelham on the terrace. When she has talked it out with him, she will be ready for me."

"Let her understand that I am not curious—I shall ask no questions."

"As you are going away in an hour or two, and I shall not see you again for a month, I may venture perhaps to make this assertion. By the time we meet again your curiosity will probably be so far diminished as to allow of

your occasionally talking to me without trying to worm out the secret."

Ellen meanwhile, from the window in her mother's room, had espied Pelham taking a moody turn on the terrace alone; and running down stairs quickly, and through the open front door, she came up behind him and slipped her hand through his arm. He turned rather crossly.

"It's too cold and damp for you to be out without anything on your head," he said.

For the splendid sunrise had been succeeded by a march of storm clouds across the sky, the distance was shrouded in thick darkness, and a few heavy sullen drops were falling from minute to minute.

"As if I had not been rained upon all my life," said Ellen. "Pelham, you must let me have a word or two with you. Oh, what a long time ago it seems since we walked here and heard the Angelus bell."

"It was only last night."

"The weather may well be changed; it is not so altered as my feelings are."

"What has happened to change them?"

"Last night I thought we should stay here all the summer happily with Lesbia, and now I know that I am walking up and down this terrace for the last time—that never, never again as long as I live will I come here again.

Pelham, did you not understand at breakfast that Mr. and Miss Thornley suspect me of having torn up that essay of his ?”

“ You ! but you did not do it ? ”

“ Oh no.”

“ Then why on earth did not you say so ? . Come with me and say it now.”

“ No, for I cannot prove my words ; I can’t explain the suspicious circumstances ; and, Pelham, I will confide in you, and no one else. I know who did it, and I mean never to tell.”

“ Then you are very much to blame, and I will have nothing to say to it. I suppose it’s Malachy you are screening. You and Connor choose to look on him as a victim, on account of the past, and I say nothing against it ; but when it comes to sacrificing your own character——”

“ If they can’t find out what I am,” interrupted Ellen, drawing herself up, but with a sob in her voice, “ I cannot help it. Pelham, dear, it is not Malachy I am screening. Will you walk back to the end of the terrace with me, and listen quietly to what I have to say before you speak to either of the Thornleys ? ”

“ If you like.”

“ Pelham, do you remember the evening when we crossed over from England that last time ? ”

"Of course I remember ; what of it ?"

"You were annoyed with me because I wanted to go on deck when it was windy. You thought it unladylike, or something, and we disputed until papa came and took me up to walk with him. He had overheard our little quarrel, and all the time we were pacing the deck together, he was talking to me about you, praising you and reproving me for not minding you. It was as if he knew it was the last long talk he and I should ever have."

"Praising me ?"

"Yes ; he told me to trust to you more than to Connor, for that you were the brother to be depended on, though you pretended then to care so little for home. He said he knew you had a true heart at the bottom, and however you might be annoyed by our different ways, he was sure you would stand by me and protect me if trouble came upon us. He was afraid, he said, that Connor would always be more of a charge than a protection, and that I must try to guide him, and both of us look up to you."

"He said all that about me ?" cried Pelham, his face flushing with emotion ; "I had no idea that he thought in that way of me. I used to believe that he never noticed me—that he hardly knew anything about me."

"Ah, you were wrong there ; he was always noticing."

"But I disgusted him by my reserve, just as I disgust

Connor and you, so that you can't now believe how earnestly I desire to help you."

"Papa understood you, you see, in spite of reserve; and I am going to show you to-day that I take you at his word, by asking you to stand by me, as he said you would, though it is in a way you won't like, and though I can only give you a half confidence."

"Of course I will stand by you, Ellen—who else should? but I don't see how I can do it effectually unless you will tell me the whole truth."

"But that is just the favour I am asking of you, dear—to act for me without knowing all my reasons. I feel that we ought not to stay here a day longer, and I want you to take it on yourself to order our going without questioning me too closely why it must be so. It is a great deal to ask, I know, but I think you will do it for me. I have thought it all out since daylight this morning. You said last night that it was bitter to live on favour, but how much keener will be the bitterness if we feel that we are acting treacherously by our helpers?"

"Treacherously! what do you mean, Ellen? Where is the treachery?"

"It feels like treachery to have concealments from firm friends who are serving you with all their might; and I told you just now that I shall have to hide some-

thing from the Thornleys, and in hiding it leave them to believe I have injured them myself."

"How can you do it? how can you bear to seem so mean?"

"Oh, Pelham, don't. I am not sure that I can bear it at all. I am trying to put the thought of what they must think of me out of my head. Only I know that I cannot bear to stay an hour longer in this house seeming what you say to them."

"You owe the plain truth to them and to me."

"No, I think not; because the truth will not make our ingratitude seem any the less, and it would do harm to several other people; and besides, what happened last night was only one of my reasons for thinking we ought to go. I did not know of this suspicion against me this morning when I was pondering over our position here, and it grew clear to me then, that if you and I were to speak out what we know and feel, we are the last people Bride Thornley would fix upon as companions for Lesbia in her absence. Knowing this, ought we to stay?"

"If you talk to Lesbia about Connor, if you convey messages between them, then I do call it treachery."

"No, Pelham, I have not done that; but I know that he has sent her tokens and letters, and I have held my tongue about it. I believe that if she went to England with her



brother and sister, and heard nothing about us for six months, she would forget us all, and it would be best for her that she should."

"Last night you told me not to be *farouche*."

"Yes, because I really think your distant, shy manner makes her suspect your feelings, and fixes her thoughts on you. It is impossible to act quite openly and naturally while our feelings are so complicated. The only safe thing is to make a complete break, to cut ourselves away from them, and then—then at least, we are free; and if misfortunes come upon us, we shall not drag more people down into the vortex than need be."

"You have changed your opinion since last night, when you said you would accept any service from John Thornley."

"Yes, I know; one goes on walking along a bit of road seeing only the day's journey, till suddenly something makes one take a far-sighted look round, and one sees where one is going. This time, dear, you and I have to turn right round for we are going wrong."

"You advise me, then, to go straight to John Thornley and tell him—my—my feelings for Lesbia, as a reason for leaving the place at once and never seeing them again?"

"No, I don't think you should speak of your feelings for her, unless you mean to ask for her, and your pride won't

let you do that. It would be an unnecessary humiliation. I only meant to make them understand that you and I together feel we must go. I know it is selfish to put the hard task of speaking on you, but you are the strong one, and our father said I was to come to you; and besides they don't suspect you of anything—they have no quarrel with you."

"John Thornley said there was to be no quarrel with anyone."

"He is the most generous person in the world, I think; but that does not help me. He believes that I have injured him. We cannot stay in his house after that."

"It will be a great blow to our mother, I am afraid; she likes being here."

"Yes, but she will reconcile herself to going at once if you tell her it is right."

"I suppose it is right. If you are really suspected, and cannot or will not clear yourself, we have no choice."

"You will say as little as possible about me, only that we agree in wishing to go home to-day."

"If I may not exculpate you, I shall certainly say very little about you."

"Then you will go and speak now, Pelham, before it is too late. I will wait outside. I shall be on the higher terrace in aunt Ellen's garden, when you want me."

The storm-clouds had now blown over towards the higher hills, leaving clear, blue sky over some of the nearer peaks. Ellen climbed the little rocky path to the highest terrace of the garden, and stood for a long time looking round. Connor and D'Arcy had been there last night; there were marks of their feet on the wet path that led up to the terrace. How much had the moonlight shown them of the little hill-side garden that long ago Aunt Ellen had planned and laid out for her own special domain, Ellen wondered. It was sad to think of her son coming there by stealth, but soon no one of them would be better off, they would all be strangers alike, and as time went on forgotten—forgotten of course. Ellen thought of the day when she and Anne O'Flaherty had walked up and down the terrace, talking of the journey to England in prospect then, when Anne had told her that her lot in life might be like her own, to serve those she loved secretly, without receiving thanks for her service. Ah, but had Anne in her experience ever been called upon for service that cost such bitter pain as this secret bearing of the consequences of Connor's folly caused Ellen to-day? Anne had thought of sacrifices for assured good results, not of bearing to be involved in blame through the folly of the person served, or perhaps not served, ruined, by keeping his secret. The battle of contending thoughts that had racked her

mind all night seemed about to begin again, but Ellen made a strong effort and put it away. There was another side of the question that had something more of comfort in it, and she turned her thoughts resolutely to that. She could at least be sure she was right in breaking completely with the Thornleys and Lesbia. It was the only honest course to take, unless she gave up Connor and his patriotic dreams, and resolutely declined to be involved in any further risk he might run. If she chose the side of danger, and yet could not openly declare her choice, she was bound to watch that no friend of hers was involved unwittingly in the trouble that might follow—Lesbia through affection to Connor, or another person through affection for herself. It was best—it was necessary to break suddenly whatever ties had grown up between herself and the friends—no the one friend—who ever since the night of her father's death had stood apart in her thoughts as one of those "peculiar people whom death makes dear."

It would be ungenerous to let him suffer again through her, when further misfortunes came; and after this last experience of Connor's recklessness, what hope was there that successive troubles would not come? It was best to let the friendship go with other things. There could be no question that honesty pointed to the sacrifice, yet Ellen found it harder than she had expected to acquiesce in the

decree. She felt it almost like voluntarily putting away from her a last remnant of her father's love and care, which had clung round her till now. Without ever having put the thought into words, she had all along had an inward conviction that when John Thornley took her father's dead body out of her arms on the morning of his death, he had deliberately taken upon himself the task of caring for her, as her father had cared. She had been depending on this care more than she had been aware of through the past, long, sad months, and now it seemed very hard to put it away, while the horizon all around them looked darker than ever; while certain poverty and hard privations were close upon them, and fears of uncertain shape were hovering in the distance.

She had begun to think that Pelham had forgotten her, and was turning back to the house to look for him, when she saw Bride Thornley coming towards her, up the steep garden path. Her face and manner as she hurriedly approached Ellen, were marked by the tokens of mingled stiffness and nervousness that were sure signs in her of great agitation.

"I persuaded your brother Pelham to let me come and speak to you in his stead," she began, breathlessly, as soon as she was near enough to speak. "He seems to have taken some strange notion into his head that you are all going to leave us immediately. I gather that it is

your wish chiefly; and he has gone now to prepare your mother. But I cannot bear to have it settled without more consideration. John is so dreadfully hurt. Would you object to turn back with me to the terrace, and let me have a word—just one word—with you in private?"

The word was evidently a very hard one for Bride to speak. She made one or two false starts, and then burst forth impetuously and somewhat incoherently, "You told me once that you were sure I should not blame you for sympathising with your brother, and serving him at all risks; and your saying so makes me hope that you will understand what I am going to ask you now in my brother's interest and forgive me if I seem impertinent."

"I do indeed," interrupted Ellen, quickly. "You must not think, please, that I am going away because I am offended at anything you said this morning, or that I shall be offended at anything you may say. I don't see how you can help believing and feeling as you do about what happened last night; and I know I have no right to be angry."

"There!" cried Bride; "I have spoken inconsiderately again. I came out to apologize to you as John entreated me to do, and I see I have only repeated my offence. But, Ellen, I was going on to say more; I was going to ask

you as a great favour to myself, as something I shall value beyond any gift that could be given me, to send me back to the house with some little word of explanation that would make us all happy together again. A very few words, would I am sure, be enough to make all the painful impressions of last night pass away like a dream. Cannot you take me for a friend so far as to speak such words privately to me? Perhaps I may not always have appeared as cordial and kind as, indeed, I have felt; but never in my life have I begged anything of anyone as earnestly as I beg this of you. Do not refuse to satisfy me; do not reject me as a friend."

Ellen did not answer immediately; she turned away her eyes from Bride's agitated face, and looked down for some time at the castle beneath them, with its dear old familiar turrets and its ivy-clad upper windows, through which so many editions of her childish self seemed to look out at her, beckoning her back to it. A strong feeling came to her as she looked; that having or not having Bride Thornley for a friend, meant for her restoration to all the old joys of home, or going out solitary somewhere—into a wilderness.

But it would not do to balance consequences. She had decided what was the honest course a few minutes before, and could only speak the words that pledged her to it.

She turned towards Bride again, and saw as she began to speak to her, how all the late kindly emotions died out of her face, and how it stiffened into hard disapproval as she completed her sentence. "I am sorry," Ellen faltered, "but I think it had better rest as my brother and I decided when we talked together just now. I am not sure that we did right in coming here; and I am quite sure we are doing right in going away. We shall only make it worse by talking."

"My first feeling was the same as yours, I confess," answered Bride, coldly; "but I promised my brother to use all the influence I had to dissuade you from a resolution which he thought too unfriendly. He at least has been a consistent friend to you and yours."

"We know it," said Ellen, sadly, "Pelham and Connor and I; and we are grateful. You will never believe that of me again, I am afraid, but it is true."

They left the terrace and walked back to the house in silence, parting at the hall door. Bride sought out her brother in his study to tell him of her failure, and Ellen went back to her mother's room. She feared she had another hard task awaiting her there, but she found that Pelham had spared her all trouble by expressing his wish to return to Eagle's Edge so decidedly that Mrs. Daly had no heart left to make objections.



Not only was Pelham's will law to her, but the suspicion roused by his manner, that his pride had received a wound, awoke an answering pride in her heart that stilled every remonstrance, and steeled her to play her part with the quiet, cold dignity of former times. Not for worlds would she allow John Thornley or Lesbia to suspect a shade of reluctance in her to leave a house where her son had possibly been slighted.

It was announced through the household that Mr. and Miss Thornley had postponed their journey to London indefinitely, and the carriage that had been brought out to carry them to meet the public car was remanded for an hour, and ordered to come round again by and by to convey Mrs. Daly and Ellen to Eagle's Edge.

Lesbia wandered vaguely from room to room, too restless to settle to any occupation, and too secretly uneasy in her conscience to venture on the close cross-questioning of John and Bride that anxiety and curiosity prompted. If only she had had courage to acquaint Bride with that foolish little incident of the shamrock wreath, and with the still more foolish birthday visit, and the little notes and love-tokens from Connor that Murdock Malachy had been surreptitiously forcing upon her during these last days she would have felt freer now to act according to her wishes, and as mistress of the house resent the summary

dismissal of her own invited guests. But for these recollections she might even have ventured (was she not a great heiress, and perhaps obliged on that ground to take more upon herself than became other girls?) to push open the library door, which all the morning stood just ajar, affording her a glimpse of Pelham Daly standing in the recess of the new bay window and playing the devil's tattoo on a pane; and entering, she might have broken in on his reverie with some little question that would have led on to an answer at least, perhaps to an explanation of their going away that would let her know a great deal more than Bride or John could tell. There could be no harm in just that. Why Bride herself had approvingly read aloud to her the history of an heiress who in very long verses drew a purple curtain and disclosed herself to her poet lover—

“With her two white hands extended, as if praying one offended,  
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.”

Lesbia stood on tiptoe in the middle of the drawing-room, and craned her neck to catch a glimpse of her own face reflected in the round convex mirror, which repeated the glories of the room in a long, lessening vista. But she had been crying, and her eyes showed the red lines round them terribly plainly; and she thought she looked a fright, and did not dare go into the library and enact Lady Geraldine's courtship just yet; and the moments and the

devil's tattoo went on—and on—and on—till the opportunity was lost. There was a noise of carriage wheels on the ground ; voices were heard calling in the hall ; John and Bride came out of the study together ; Ellen and Mrs. Daly appeared slowly descending the stairs ; the music on the library bay window-pane ceased suddenly ; and the question of whether to enter or not to enter the half-opened door, was decided for vacillating Lesbia without further consideration on her part.

Some of the out-door servants, old friends of the Dalys, whose services Lesbia had retained, assembled round the hall door to take a last look at the departing guests, and say "good-bye." It made a diversion of interest, and caused a little confusion at the last that was equally welcome to Ellen and to Bride, as it covered any lack of cordiality in the manner of leave-taking which might otherwise have been too apparent. Mrs. Daly leaned out of the carriage window as they were driving away, to take a last look at the castle and wave a farewell to their late hosts ; but Ellen and Pelham equally avoided last looks at anything, or anyone, and would not appear to see that John and Lesbia had followed them to the end of the terrace, and were looking after the carriage with an intentness somewhat inconsistent with the hurried, cold good-byes.

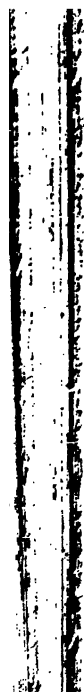
"This is my real farewell to the castle," Mrs. Daly said, as she sank back into the carriage when they had passed the gate. "When we left it last autumn I could not think of the place, and now I hardly understand why it is so hard for me to tear myself away. My love for Castle Daly has indeed come too late; if I had only felt about it as I do now when I carried you all off to England, five years ago, I should have acted a very different part, and results might have been different. I might not be leaving it a widow to-day; it might be home still."

Ellen took her mother's hand and kissed it, feeling that she had never loved her half so well before as she did now that the word of regret had passed her lips; and when sorrow was no longer a sealed subject between them.

During the rest of the silent drive to Eagle's Edge, her mind was full of recollections of the first time they had left the castle. Her mother blamed herself; but was it all her fault? One by one the circumstances that led to their first banishment recurred to Ellen's memory. It was a rash act of Connor's, connived at and concealed by herself, that had been the final cause of their departure then—then, as to-day. Should she call this strange repetition of events in her life a strange fate?—or was it true, as she had read in a philosophical German novel the other day,

that character makes fate; and that lives woven and interwoven with each other will still repeat the same events, and clothe themselves in the same colours, while the characters remain unchanged?

END OF VOL. II.



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